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and eminently useful collection  
of nearly 5,000 Briticisms (and Americanisms)*

# BRITISH ENGLISH A TO ZED



*Revised and Updated Edition*

GENERAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN  
ENGLISH SYNTAX PRONUNCIATION  
FEATURES OF SPEECH PUNCTUATION AND  
CURRENCY FINANCIAL TERMS UNIT  
AUTOMOTIVE TERMS MUSICAL NAMES  
NAMES BOTANICAL AND ZOOLOGICAL  
TERMS CONNOTATIVE PLACE-NAMES



(the ) Queen 1. *Inf.* To stay at a dance through the Queen  
to stay to the very end. It is usual to play *God Save the Queen*  
to close the proceedings, and the Queen in this context is simply  
short for the title of the national anthem.

2. *Inf.* The toast to the Queen, known as the Loyal Toast.

Queen Mum See mummy



# BRITISH ENGLISH A TO ZED

## PRAISE FOR THE PREVIOUS EDITION:

“... the outstanding authority on the similarities and differences between British and American English.”

—Laurence Urdang, *Verbatim, The Language Quarterly*

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—*Kirkus Reviews*

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### British

aerodrome  
court shoes  
high tea  
ruby wedding  
On your bike!  
feeder  
yonks

### American

airfield  
pumps  
light supper  
40th wedding anniversary  
Get lost!  
child’s bib  
ages

**Eugene Ehrlich** is coeditor of the *Oxford American Dictionary* and author of numerous books on language, including *You’ve Got Ketchup on Your Muumuu: An A-to-Z Guide to English Words from Around the World*; *The Highly Selective Dictionary for the Extraordinarily Literate*; and *Veni, Vidi, Vici: Conquer Your Enemies, Impress Your Friends with Everyday Latin*. A former senior lecturer of English at Columbia University, he lives in Mamaroneck, New York.

The late **Norman W. Schur** wrote several books on language and divided his time between England and the United States.

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BRITISH  
ENGLISH  
A TO ZED  




# BRITISH ENGLISH A TO ZED



*Revised and Updated Edition*

NORMAN W. SCHUR  
REVISED BY EUGENE EHRLICH



Facts On File, Inc.

## **BRITISH ENGLISH A TO ZED**

Revised and updated edition.

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*For Marjorie Schur—incurable Anglophile*





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# FOREWORD

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Norman W. Schur, known for his work as an attorney and interpreter of British English, departed this earth a few years ago, leaving the rest of us bereft.

Well before his death, he communicated with me through Dorothy Pace, a mutual friend and one-time collaborator on one of my early books, asking whether I would work on a book with him. I never did find out the title of the book he had in mind, but I do know that his request came at an inopportune time for me and I had to refuse.

At any rate, I was quite familiar with his lexicographic work, particularly the first edition of the book you are now reading, and I felt honored when Schur's publisher, Facts On File, came to me much later to ask my help in preparing a second edition of Schur's work.

With all humility, I dedicate this work to Marjorie Schur, formerly of Connecticut. Further, I acknowledge the willing help of Tamara Glenn, one of my English daughters-in-law, in sorting through some of the new entries for the work.

Eugene Ehrlich  
Mamaroneck, New York



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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This lexicon first appeared in the form of *British Self-Taught: With Comments in American*, published by Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., New York, in 1973. Johnston & Bacon Publishers, of London and Edinburgh, a subsidiary of Cassell & Collier-Macmillan Publishers of London, brought out a somewhat revised edition under the same title the following year. Under the new title *English English*, it made its bow under the aegis of Verbatim, Essex, Connecticut in 1980. This incarnation, with the inestimable help of Kate Kelly, became *British English, A to Zed*.

For the first edition, help far beyond the reasonable bounds of hospitality came to me from many kind and patient English friends. Besides much painstaking correspondence over the years, there were many long sessions in English homes, gardens and pubs: countless words, gallons of tea, barrels of beer. I was indebted to my great friends John and Sarah (now Sir John and Lady) Freeland, Ronald Smith, Alan Vaughan, Donald Walker and Peter Tanter, and my now dear departed C. E. Thompson, B. T. Flanagan, Kenneth Fearon, Charles Kirby and Philip Harding; not a single philologist in the lot, of immensely varied background, with nothing whatever in common except kindness, intelligence, wit and taste. On the American side, I owed much to Edmée Busch, who helped put the manuscript into intelligible shape, and my secretary, Dorothy Schnur, stubbornly loyal through moments of self-doubt.

For the second edition, my oldest friend, Ralph Berton, was of invaluable aid in supplying new entries and suggestions for improvement. Robert Elwell kept sending a flow of new items that I gleefully adopted. Dr Edwin M. Hudson plied me with new entries and recondite discussion. Warren Knock, of Johnston & Bacon Publishers, was patient and creative during that episode. After the appearance of the London edition, I received a long and learned letter from Paul S. Falla, a New Zealander with a distinguished background in the United Kingdom diplomatic service, now living in England. His help has been enormous. Ronald Mansbridge, formerly head of the New York office of the Cambridge University Press, has never faltered in his interest and help. I have also been fortunate in receiving creative editorial guidance from the noted lexicographer Laurence Urdang.



# PREFACE

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The book is essentially a glossary of Briticisms for the guidance of Americans caught in the entrapment of a common language. I have seen fit to include certain terms and expressions which, though they may be fading from current British use, or may even have disappeared completely from most people's everyday conversation, an American might run up against in the literature of a few years ago, or quite possibly in the conversation of an elderly person, especially in the more remote parts of the British countryside. In some instances, I have expanded the discussion in an effort to demonstrate not only peculiarities of the language of Britain, but also aspects of her culture as reflected by her language.

What began as a pastime took on tangible form and, somewhat to my own surprise, has emerged as a serious compilation. I would be grateful if (in addition to omissions and possible erroneous inclusions and definitions) new items which appear from time to time were called to the attention of the publisher. Not the least of my rewards has been the volume and tenor of the response I have received from scholars and aficionados in many parts of the world who have written letters ranging from a few words of appreciation to essays full of valuable information and comments. Many of the entries must evoke some controversy and even censure. "A dictionary-maker," said H. W. Fowler in his preface to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (reprinted in the sixth edition of that admirable work, 1976), "unless he is a monster of omniscience, must deal with a great many matters of which he has no first-hand knowledge. That he has been guilty of errors and omissions in some of these he will learn soon after publication, sometimes with gratitude to his enlightener, sometimes otherwise."

—Norman Schur



# EXPLANATORY NOTES

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For a full discussion of the criteria used in assembling the Briticisms and their American equivalents the reader is referred to the Introduction. The following are brief notes on how to use the dictionary.

## Entries

Briticisms, listed alphabetically, are set in boldface on the left-hand side of each entry. American equivalents are set in boldface on the right, opposite the British headword. When there is no American equivalent, *SEE COMMENT* refers the reader to the comment under the headword.

## Labels

Parts of speech are set in italics, immediately following the British headword. Usage labels: when a Briticism is nonstandard this is indicated in italics, either at the beginning of the comment, or, when there is no comment, immediately following the function label. The labels used are: *'Slang, Inf.* (Informal), *Old-fash.* (Old-fashioned), and *Rare*. American equivalents are similarly labeled. Though it has been the policy to attempt to provide American equivalents of the same usage level, that has not always been possible, and in such cases a comment always follows the headword. When the American equivalent is only an approximation of its British counterpart, it is preceded by *approx.*

## Pronunciation

When the pronunciation of a Briticism is idiosyncratic, i.e., not ascribable to general differences between British and American pronunciation, a phonetic transcription in small capital letters is given at the beginning of the comment, following the usage label. The system of notation used is too simple to merit a table of its own.

## Sense Distinctions

Arabic numerals separate the senses of a headword, both in the American equivalent and in the comment. Divisions are based on usage rather than strict semantic distinctions.

## Comment

Examples of typical usage are set in italics, as are British and American terms that are used to illustrate meaning. Glosses of Briticisms are set in single quotes. Briticisms used in the comments which appear in the alphabetical listing are set in **boldface** when it is felt that referring to them would add to the understanding of the comment.

## Cross-References

*See*, *See also*, and *See under* refer the reader to other entries and to the Appendices. Cross-reference is based on various criteria: related meanings (similarity and contrast), related subject matter (e.g., pub terms, telephone terminology—in such cases the reader may be referred to the Appendices), morphological similarity (in

several cases the American equivalent is itself an entry, e.g., *vest* is the equivalent of the British *waistcoat* and is also a Britishism of which the American equivalent is *undershirt*). Readers are also referred to the Appendices that deal with general differences between British and American English, when they have bearing on the entry. Words appearing in **boldface** type in the text of a comment have their own entries in proper alphabetic sequence.

## Appendices

The Appendices are of two kinds: the first section contains short notes on general differences between British and American English. These are far from comprehensive, but the reader is referred to works that deal more fully with the topics discussed.

The second section contains tables and glossaries of terms whose meaning and use are best shown when the terms are grouped together (e.g., currency, measures) and lists of specialized slang terms of which only a few are included in the A–Z section.

## Index of American Equivalents

This addition to the new edition of the book should be of special help to users searching for British equivalents of particular American words and phrases. The American equivalents given in the main, A–Z section of the book are listed alphabetically in the Index, together with the equivalent Britishisms, which the reader will find treated in full in the main section.

## Abbreviations

<i>adj.</i>	adjective	<i>n.</i>	noun
<i>adv.</i>	adverb	<i>pl.</i>	plural
<i>approx.</i>	approximate	<i>prep.</i>	preposition
<i>conj.</i>	conjunction	<i>v.i.</i>	verb, intransitive
<i>inf.</i>	informal	<i>v.t.</i>	verb, transitive
<i>interj.</i>	interjection		

BRITISH  
ENGLISH  
A TO ZED  




# INTRODUCTION

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According to Marcus Cunliffe, in *The Literature of the United States*, a chauvinistic delegate to the Continental Congress moved that the new nation drop the use of the English language entirely; William Morris, in *Newsbreak* (Stackpole, New York, 1975), reports that the more violently anti-British leaders moved to reject English as the national language in favor of Hebrew, until it was pointed out that very few Americans could speak it; and another delegate proposed an amendment providing that the United States retain English and make the British learn Greek!

American claims to the English language are far from being left unanswered. In April 1974, Jacques Chastenot of the Académie française, suggesting Latin as the most suitable official tongue for the European Economic Community, expressed the concern that "English, or more exactly American, might otherwise take over." He characterized "American" as "not a very precise idiom." Frederick Wood's attempt at consolation in his preface to *Current English Usage* (Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, 1962) might seem even more offensive: "Certain words and constructions have been described as Americanisms. This does not necessarily mean that they are bad English." In "An Open Letter to the Honorable Mrs. Peter Rodd (Nancy Mitford) On A Very Serious Subject," Evelyn Waugh, discussing the American influence, writes: "... American polite vocabulary is different from ours. ... [It] is pulverized between two stones, refinement and overstatement." Cyril Connolly went pretty far in *The Sunday Times* (London) of December 11, 1966: "... the American language is in a state of flux based on the survival of the unfittest."

Whatever the relationship may be, and however strongly opinions are voiced, it seems clear that in the jet age, what with the movies (the *cinema*), TV (the *telly*), and radio (the *wireless* still, to many Britons), linguistic parochialism is bound to diminish. In *Words in Sheep's Clothing* (Hawthorn Books, Inc., New York, 1969), Mario Pei, after referring to the different meanings given to the same word in the two countries, writes: "... In these days of rapid communication and easy interchange, such differences are less important than you would think." The latest edition of the *Pocket Oxford Dictionary* includes a fair number of American terms not found in earlier editions: *teen-age*, *paper-back*, *T-shirt*, *supermarket*, *sacred cow*, *sick joke*, and many others. And in their recorded dialogue, published under the title *A Common Language, British and American English* in 1964 by the British Broadcasting Corporation and the Voice of America, Professors Randolph Quirk of University College, London, and Albert H. Marckwardt, of Princeton University, agreed, according to the Foreword, that "... the two varieties of English have never been so different as people have imagined, and the dominant tendency, for several decades now, has been clearly that of convergence and even greater similarity." And in a similarly optimistic mood, Ronald Mansbridge, manager emeritus of the American branch of the Cambridge University Press, in his foreword to *Longitude 30 West* (a confidential report to the Syndics of the Cambridge Univer-

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\* The "opposing" parties were on the same side of the controversy.

sity Press by Lord Acton), refers to the two countries as “strongly linked together—let us reject the old joke ‘divided’—by the English language.”

Welcome or not, the process of convergence is slow, and the differences linger. Herbert R. Mayes, in his London Letter in the *Saturday Review* of November 14, 1970, wrote: “. . . There are enough archaisms here to keep an American off balance. . . . The British are stubborn. . . .” And Suzanne Haire (Lady Haire of White-abbey, formerly with the BBC, then living in New York), writing in *The New York Times* of January 11, 1972, of her “Study of ‘American-English’ at its source,” mentioned the “bizarre misunderstandings [which] can result from expressions which have different meanings on the two sides of the Atlantic.” The example she selected was the informal noun *tube*, meaning *subway* in Britain and *television* in the United States.

When we get away from standard English and are faced with the ephemerality of slang and informal terms, the division widens. In a letter to *The Times* published July 12, 1974, the literary critic and translator Nicholas Bethell, answering objections to his review of an English translation of *The Gulag Archipelago*, wrote: “. . . What I was objecting to was the use of words like ‘bums’ and ‘broad’s’ in a translation. They are too American. ‘Yobbos’ and ‘birds’ would be equally inappropriate. They are too British. It is a problem that translators are often faced with, how to render slang without adding confusing overtones. One has to try to find a middle way.” To a Briton, a *bum* is a *behind*, and a *broad* a *river-widening*. To an American, *yobbo* (an extension of *yob*, backslang—reverse spelling—for *boy*, meaning *lout* or *bum*) would be unintelligible, as would *bird*, in its slang sense, a ‘character,’ in the sense of an *eccentric*, as in *He’s a queer bird!*

Whether standard, informal, or slang, and despite the “convergence” theory, the differences are still many and confusing. Bearing a London dateline, Russell Baker’s column in *The New York Times* of September 15, 1970, began: “One of the hardest languages for an American to learn is English,” and the language he was referring to was British English. About a year later, Henry Stanhope’s review of *Welcome to Britain* (Whitehall Press, London, 1971) in the September 3, 1971 [London] *Times* referred to a glossary in the book as going “. . . some way towards bridging the linguistic gulf, broader than the Atlantic Ocean, which still separates our cultures.” And on an arrival a few years ago at Heathrow Airport, London, I picked up a copy of *Welcome*, a newspaper available without charge to passengers, and read Sylvia Goldberg’s article headed “Perils of the Spoken Word” which began: “One thing American visitors to Britain are seldom warned about is the ‘language problem,’” and continued with the observation that the “. . . most mundane negotiation, the simplest attempt at communication with the natives can lead to unutterable confusion.”

Whatever the future may hold in store, I have found that many facets of British English are still in need of clarification and interpretation. For despite occasional deletions because the American equivalent has all but taken over, my list of Britishisms has expanded substantially. Britishisms fall into three main categories:

1. Those that are used in both countries to mean different things. Thus, *davenport* means ‘small writing desk’ in Britain and ‘large sofa’ in America. Some words and phrases in this category have diametrically opposite meanings in the two countries. *Bomb* in Britain is slang for ‘dazzling success’; in America it generally means ‘dismal flop.’ The verb *table* has already been mentioned as an example of the same phenomenon.
2. Those that are not used at all in America, or extremely rarely, like *call box* and *kiosk* for ‘telephone booth’; *hoarding* for ‘billboard’; *dustman* for ‘garbage man.’

3. Those that are not used (or if used at all, used differently) in America for the simple reason that their referent does not exist there. Examples abound: *beefeater*; *commoner*; *during hours*; *Oxbridge*. Often these refer to social and cultural institutions and have taken on connotative meanings which may have approximate American counterparts: *Chelsea*; *Bloomsbury*; *redbrick*.

Some terms qualify as *Britishisms* not because they are exclusively British but because they have a peculiarly British flavor. I lump such terms under the general heading "preferences." For example, if a British girl and an American girl were out shopping together, the British girl, pointing to a shop window, might say, "I'd like to go into that shop and look at that frock," while her friend would more likely say, "I'd like to go into that store and look at that dress." The British girl might have said *dress* but would not have said *store*. The American girl might have said *shop* but would never have said *frock*. And the person who waited on them would be a *saleswoman* or *salesman* to the American girl, but a *shop assistant* to her British friend. It is all rather delicate and subtle, and these preferences keep shifting. Here is a sample list of mutually intelligible terms which qualify as preferences:

BRITAIN	AMERICA
<i>blunt</i> (e.g., of a pencil)	<i>dull</i>
<i>crash</i> (automobile, train)	<i>collision</i>
<i>engaged</i> (busy)	<i>tied up</i>
<i>fancy</i> (verb)	1. like 2. suppose
<i>motor-car</i>	<i>automobile</i>
<i>position</i> (the way things stand)	<i>situation</i>
<i>queer</i> (peculiar)	<i>funny</i>
<i>sea</i>	1. ocean 2. beach
<i>snag</i> (describing a troublesome situation)	<i>trouble, problem, catch, hitch</i>
<i>tablet</i>	<i>pill</i>
<i>tidy</i>	<i>clean, orderly, neat</i>
<i>trade</i>	<i>business</i>
<i>wager</i>	<i>bet</i>
<i>wretched</i> (e.g., of weather, person, luck)	<i>awful, terrible</i>

In addition to matters of preference, there is a category that may best be described by the term *overlaps*, to describe the situation where the British also use the American equivalent, but the Americans do not (or usually do not) use the British equivalent. The British, for example, say both *crackers* and *nutty* (meaning 'crazy'), but Americans do not use *crackers* in that sense. Many American terms are by now used more frequently in Britain than the parallel *Britishism* which has become old-fashioned. I have preferred to include such entries, but in such cases, have mentioned the increasing use of or total takeover by the American equivalent. See, for example, *aisle*; *flicks*.

Conversely, *Britishisms* which may be familiar to many Americans have been included where in my opinion they have not gained sufficient currency in America to be considered naturalized. In years to come, as jets become bigger and faster and the world continues to shrink, many such items will undoubtedly acquire dual citizenship. In this area, too, inclusion was the rule.

Most *Britishisms* have precise American equivalents, in which case they are given in boldface. Occasionally, however, this has not been possible. This applies to terms with figurative meanings; here we are on the slippery ground of connotations, implicit references, social context, and cultural implications. Many of

these are slang and informal expressions that are too closely tied to British social and cultural institutions to have American equivalents, and in such cases it has been our policy not to attempt to invent one, but instead, to refer the reader to a comment providing a definition and illustrations of the uses and connotations of the British term. This policy is also followed in the case of encyclopedic entries, like *the Commons*; *beefeater*; *Dame*. (The phrase SEE COMMENT in place of an American equivalent refers the reader to the text immediately below the entry.)

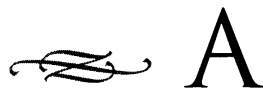
On the other hand, there are a good many Britishisms that have close or approximate equivalents in American English. These are cases where the referents may be different; but the connotative meanings, based on the social or cultural backgrounds of the referents, or the referents themselves, may be similar enough to render the parallel terms approximate equivalents. Thus, though *the City* and *Wall Street* have different referents, it is reasonable to assume that in most contexts in which a Briton would refer to *the City*, an American would say *Wall Street*.

Many terms have "shared senses," meanings common to both countries. The noun *note*, for instance, can mean 'musical note' (do, re, mi), 'written evidence of debt' (promissory note), 'memorandum' (he made a note of it), 'message' (he passed her a note), and so on. In Britain it has an additional sense that it does not possess in America: a 'piece of paper money' (a one-pound note, a banknote). The American equivalent in that sense is *bill* (a one-dollar bill, a five-dollar bill). Correspondingly, the word *bill* has a multiplicity of senses; the *beak* of a bird, the *draft* of a proposed law, etc. It would unduly lengthen the discussion to list or refer to all shared meanings. It is therefore to be assumed that in the case of terms with more than one sense, those not dealt with are common to both countries.

It has been difficult to apply precise criteria of inclusion and exclusion. Many slang and informal terms have been included but others omitted because they seemed too ephemeral or too narrowly regional. A *roke* is a *ground fog*, but only in Norfolk. In certain parts of Surrey they eat *clod and stickin*, an unattractive-sounding stew, but if you asked for it outside of that area you would be met with a totally uncomprehending stare. It is well to avoid Lancashiremen and Yorkshiremen who are *razat*: they're *sore* at you. In parts of Yorkshire a donkey is a *fussock* or a *fussenock*, in Lancashire a *bronkus* or a *pronkus*. Such narrowly restricted dialectal terms, though amusing enough, have been reluctantly passed by. In the Appendix section, however, we have included certain lists of localized slang.

Pronunciation has been indicated by reference to common words presumably familiar to the general reader, rather than through the use of phonetic symbols which remain an unbroken code to all but specialists. There is an index of American terms for the benefit of those seeking British equivalents. There are appendices dealing with general aspects of British English, and special glossaries of related terms better presented in that fashion than as separate headwords.

A separate section, "Explanatory Notes," is devoted to instructions for the most efficient use of the book.

**A.A.****Automobile Association**

Opposite number to America's A.A.A. (*American Automobile Association*). Just about everybody in Britain who drives a car is a member of the A.A. or of the R.A.C., which is short for *Royal Automobile Club*.

**A.A.A.**

SEE COMMENT

1. See **A.A.**

2. Amateur Athletic Association.

3. A film suitability rating, in Britain meaning 'not for persons under 14.'

**abandonment, n.****abandon**

In the sense of 'uninhibited conduct.' *Abandon* is used in Britain as well.

**about, adv.****around**

Used as an adverb indicating place, meaning 'near' or 'in the vicinity,' as in, *Is your father about?* In the sense of 'approximately' Americans use both terms interchangeably, but the British much prefer *about*. See also **Appendix I.A.1**.

**above the salt**

SEE COMMENT

Long ago, when the family saltcellar among the powerful and wealthy was a massive silver container, it was placed in the middle of the dining table and marked the boundary between the classes when people dined together. Those seated *above the salt* were members of the higher classes, the family and their peers; those *below the salt* were seated among the inferior guests. Today, of course, these terms are used only metaphorically. At a banquet or formal dinner, however, to sit *above the salt* is to sit in a position of distinction.

**absolutely sweet****delightful**

Usually applied to people, but it can refer to almost anything.

**academicals, n. pl.****cap and gown**

Also known as "academic costume" and the hat being called informally a "mortarboard," a term shared with the United States.

**Academy, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Royal Academy of Arts*. The *Academy* is usually so understood; *academician* refers especially to that institution. The initials R.A. after a name mean that the artist is a member of the institution.

**accept, v.i.****agree**

For instance, *I cannot accept that you have met the conditions of the contract*. A common use in Britain. See discussion under **agree**.

**access, n.****visitation**

Term used in matrimonial law, referring to the rights of the parent without custody to visit the children of the marriage. See a different usage in **except for access**; and

note an unrelated use in *Access*, the name of a credit card issued by Lloyds Bank Limited, competing with *Barclaycard*, issued by Barclays Bank Limited.

*Staying access* means 'temporary custody,' as when the party with visitation rights is authorized to have the minor child stay with him or her for limited periods, e.g., during every other weekend or on certain holidays.

**accident tout**

Both *Slang*.

**ambulance chaser****acclimatize, v.t.****acclimate****accommodation, n.****accommodations**

In the sense of 'food and lodgings,' the British use the singular. They seem not to use the word at all as the Americans do to include travel facilities, such as train and ship staterooms, plane seats, etc.

**accommodation address****temporary mailing address**

Used in Britain chiefly by persons who do not wish to reveal their home address. See also *poste restante*.

**according to Cocker****according to best usage**

*Inf.* Cocker was a popular 17th-century writer on arithmetic. This expression is synonymous with *according to Hoyle*, a term used in both countries. Hoyle was an 18th-century authority on card games.

**account, n.****1. bill****2. charge account**

1. Notification of an amount owing.
2. The term *charge account* is not used in Britain.

**accountant.** See **chartered accountant; commission agent; turf accountant.**

**accumulator, n.****battery**

*Battery*, too, is heard in Britain, usually applied to *dry cells*, while *accumulator* is generally reserved for *storage battery*. *Accumulator* is also used to describe a type of horse-racing bet.

**act for****represent**

Lawyers in Britain *act for*, rather than *represent*, their clients.

**action replay****instant replay**

TV term.

**actually, adv.****as a matter of fact; to tell the truth**

A pause-word, like *well . . . , you see . . . ,* etc; perhaps intended to lend importance to what follows, but in reality meaningless. Some Britons use it repeatedly in flowing discourse. Sometimes *actually* is also used in mock-modesty: *Are you the champion? Well yes, I am, actually.* It can also be used in veiled reproof: *Actually, we don't do things that way.* Here the idea is *since you force me to say it.*

**adapter, n.****multiple plug**

A double or triple (perhaps even more) plug transforming a single wall outlet into a multiple one so that two or several lamps, appliances, etc., can be plugged into the one outlet. Generally considered unsafe.

**A.D.C.****time and charges**

These letters stand for *Advice of Duration and Charges*, and are what one says to the long-distance operator in order to learn the cost of a call. As in America, A.D.C. also means 'aide-de-camp.'

**admass, n.** Also written **ad-mass.****mass-media public**

(Accent on the first syllable.) The gullible section of the public (mass) that is most easily influenced by mass-media advertising (ads); especially persons addicted to TV.

**Admiralty, n.****SEE COMMENT**

The Department of the Navy in the Government, now merged in the Ministry of Defence.

**adopt, v.t.****nominate**

At caucuses and conventions Americans *nominate* candidates who *run* for election. The British nominate *potential candidates* and finally *adopt* the ones who are going to **stand** for election.

**adversarial, adj.****adversary**

A legal term. An *adversarial* (*adversary*, in America) proceeding is a lawsuit involving actual opposing interests, as opposed to a request for a declaratory judgment.

**advert, n.****Inf. ad**

*Inf.* (Accent on the first syllable.) Informal abbreviation of *advertisement*.

**advice of receipt; advice of delivery.** *See recorded delivery.*

**advocate, n.****SEE COMMENT**

An *advocate* is a Scottish **barrister**. It is also the title of a lawyer in some of the Channel Islands, reflecting the influence of the French, who call a lawyer an *avocat*.

**aeger, n.****sick note**

(Pronounced EE'-JER or EYE'-GHER.) *Aeger* is Latin for 'sick'; the adjective is here used as a noun, in university circles. When the student is too sick to take an examination, he is given an *aegrotat* (Latin for 'he is sick'; pronounced EE'-GRO-TAT or EE'-GRO'-TAT, the latter being the correct stress in Latin), an official certification of illness testifying that he is unable to attend lectures or take an exam. The same word designates a degree granted a student who has completed all other requirements but was too ill to take the final exams.

**aerial, n.****antenna**

The British don't use *antenna* except as applied to insects, or figuratively in the plural.

**aerodrome, n.****airfield****aeroplane, n.****airplane****aesthete, n.****Slang. grind**

*Inf.* A special university term, somewhat pejorative, for a studious student; the very antithesis of a **heartly**, in America a *jock*. *See Appendix I.B.1.*

**affiliation order**

SEE COMMENT

In a paternity suit, an order of the court requiring the putative father to support or contribute to the support of the child.

**afters, n. pl.**

dessert

*Inf.* Thus: *What's for afters?*

**after the break**

SEE COMMENT

This is the dreadful pronouncement made by British **newsreaders** on stations that allow commercials, and is the equivalent of "after these messages" or words to that effect, *message* being one of the most hateful of euphemisms, foreshadowing a recital of all the advantages of the products one cannot live without.

**against the collar**

tough going

*Inf.* One meaning of *collar* is the roll around a horse's neck. This meaning gives rise to the colloquial phrases *against the collar* and *collar-work*, both of which indicate *uphill effort*.

**agency, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A special usage, in signs seen at service stations all over Britain. It means that trucks can fill up at a station displaying that sign and have the fuel billed directly to the company owning or operating the truck. The driver simply signs a form, and no money changes hands.

**agent, n.** See **commission agent; estate agent; turf accountant.**

**aggro, n.**

1. **aggravation**  
2. **aggressiveness**

1. *Slang.* In the sense of deliberate 'exasperation,' 'annoyance.'
2. *Slang.* A tendency to violence, a readiness to boil over and commit violent acts on the slightest, if any, provocation, e.g., the emotional imbalance that causes the rioting of a **football** (soccer) crowd or the destructive tendencies of a gang.

**A.G.M.** See **Annual General Meeting.**

**agree, v.t.****agree to; concede**

Except when used intransitively (*You say it's a good painting: I agree; You want \$100 for that old car? I agree*), this verb is followed in American usage by *that* (*I agree that it is so*) or by *to* (*I agree to your terms; I agree to go away*). Those constructions are equally common in Britain, but one British usage not found in America is *agree* followed by a direct object, where Americans would use *concede*, *admit*, *accept*, or *approve of*, e.g., *I agree the liability for income tax; I agree the claim for damages; I agree the price; I agree your proposal; I agree your coming tomorrow*. There is a curious relationship between the British uses of *agree* and *accept*, which are more or less the reverse of the American uses, since *agree* is used in Britain where an American would normally say *accept* (*I agree the liability for damages*) and *accept* is used there in the way in which Americans use *agree* (*I accept that he is an honest man*).

**agreed verdict**

consent decree

Legal term.

**agricultural labourer**

farmhand

**agricultural show**

An *agricultural show* represents roughly the same aspect of British life as an American *state fair* or *county fair*. The Tunbridge Wells Agricultural Show serves about the same cultural and economic purposes as, for example, the Kansas State Fair or the Great Barrington Fair in Massachusetts.

**state or county fair****air bed.** See **li-lo**.**air hostess, n.**

Performing the same functions as her American counterpart—often willingly, sometimes grudgingly.

**stewardess****airy-fairy, adj.**

*Inf.* In its original sense *airy-fairy* meant 'light and delicate.' It has now acquired a disparaging meaning: 'insubstantial,' 'superficial,' perhaps with connotations of whimsy, artiness, pretentiousness: *This New Age medicine is a lot of airy-fairy nonsense*. There would appear to be no precise American colloquial counterpart.

**approx. fey****aisle, n.**

Americans use *aisle* generically. In Britain, out of context, it refers to churches, although it is now more and more being used for shops and theaters as well.

**church aisle****albert, n.**

Also called an *Albert chain*; if used alone, the *A* drops to lower case. Based on the sartorial habits of Queen Victoria's Prince Consort.

**watch chain****A-levels, n. pl.**

The *A* stands for *advanced* just as the *O* in *O-levels* stands for *ordinary*. At the age of fifteen or sixteen, students in Britain take their *O-levels*, and at seventeen or eighteen, their *A-levels*. Both are known as G.C.E. examinations, *General Certificate of Education*, required for admission to any university. Oxford and Cambridge have additional examinations of their own, as do several other universities.

**approx. college entrance examination;****approx. Scholastic Aptitude Tests (S.A.T.)****alight, v.i.**

Seen in notices at railroad stations and bus stops in Britain.

**dismount****all in****1. Inf. everything thrown in****2. Inf. anything goes; no holds barred**

1. *Inf.* All included, as in, *The holiday cost us £100 all in* (i.e., travel, accommodation, and all other expenses included).

2. *Inf.* As in the phrase, peculiar to American ears, *all-in wrestling* in which the gladiators are permitted to do just about anything except resort to weapons.

3. Common to British and American vocabularies is the adverbial *all in*, meaning 'exhausted.'

**all my eye and Betty Martin!**

*Inf.* Various derivations proposed. The most likely would seem to be *Mihi beata mater* (which appears to be Latin for something like 'Grant to me, blessed Mother'). According to one legend, it was a far from perfect rendition of an invocation to St. Martin, a patron saint of soldiers.

**Inf. baloney!**

**allotment, n.**

Sometimes allotted free of charge to those living in public housing for the raising of vegetables for personal consumption and flowers for personal delight.

**small rented garden area****all over the shop, Inf.**

*Inf.* in a mess; in wild disorder

**allowance, n.**

Income tax terminology, referring to the amounts allowed per taxpayer, dependent, etc.

**deduction****all-round, adj.****all-around****all-rounder, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A sports term, especially in cricket, denoting a versatile player; in cricket, one good at bowling, fielding, and batting.

**all Sir Garnet**

*slang well done!*

An old-fashioned British army phrase. Sir Garnet Wolseley (1833–1913) was a famous military man who wrote the *Soldier's Pocket Book*. Anything described as *all Sir Garnet* is O.K., *done by the book*.

**all the fun of the fair****great fun**

*Inf.* *More damn fun!* Often used ironically to describe a tight situation.

**almshouse, n.****old people's home**

Originally a charitable home for the poor, the *almshouse* in Britain is today a subsidized home for old folk who live in small apartments at nominal rent, which often includes a garden **allotment**.

**alpha (beta, gamma, etc).****A (B, C, etc.)**

Symbols used by teachers in marking grades at universities generally. The Greek letters are preferred. A first-class mark in an examination is *alpha*. See also **query, 2**.

**Alsatian, n.****German shepherd dog****ambulance, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Although there are ambulances in Britain similar to those seen in America, the same term is applied to small buses that are used, under the National Health system, to transport ambulatory patients, free of charge, to and from doctors' offices or hospitals for visits. These are sit-up affairs, for those who have no car or who, for financial or physical reasons, can't manage with regular public transportation.

**amenities, n. pl.****conveniences**

Referring to household facilities. (*Amenities* in the American sense is *civilities* in Britain.) The American term *conveniences* is also used and is found in the abbreviated phrase, *mod. cons.*, which stands for *modern conveniences*. Another British equivalent is **offices**.

**American cloth****oilcloth****amongst, prep.****among**

Not quite so common as *whilst* for *while*. But also given as *among*.

**and pigs might fly!**

*Inf.* Yeah, sure!

*Inf.* Expression of disbelief in response to a prediction, also translated as "Never."

**angel on horseback**

**oyster wrapped in bacon**

Served on toast in the English version. The Scottish version substitutes smoked haddock for the oyster. See also the less glamorous **devil on horseback**.

**anglepoise lamp**

**adjustable reading lamp**

A trademark. The term describes a table lamp with a base built of a series of hinged arms with springs and counter-weights that adjust the height, beam direction, and so on.

**Annual General Meeting**

**Annual Meeting of Shareholders**  
(Stockholders)

Usually abbreviated A.G.M. What the British call an *Extraordinary General Meeting* is called a *Special Meeting of Shareholders (Stockholders)* in America.

**anorak, n.**

**light waterproof jacket**

An Eskimo word, stressed on the first syllable.

**another pair of shoes**

**a horse of a different color**

**another place**

SEE COMMENT

This is the way the House of Commons refers to the House of Lords, and it works the other way around. Incidentally, *another place* was a Victorian euphemism for *hell*.

**answer, v.i.**

**work**

*Inf.* In phrases indicating inappropriateness: *It won't answer; It didn't answer*. For example, a person reads an advertisement of the houses-for-rent variety, goes to investigate, finds the situation unsatisfactory, and in answer to a friend's question says, *It didn't answer*. An American might have said, *It wasn't for me*.

**answerphone, n.**

**answering machine**

**anti-clockwise, adj., adv.**

**counterclockwise**

**Any more for the Skylark?**

SEE COMMENT

When mother was a girl, people went to resorts like Southend and Blackpool and took rides on the little excursion boats, one of which was bound to be called the SKYLARK. As the SKYLARK was ready to depart, with a few empty seats, the attendant would cry out, *Any more for the Skylark?* This became a cliché in Britain which eventually became applicable to any situation where a last summons for action was indicated.

**apartment, n.**

**single room**

**appeal, n.**

**fund-raising campaign**

One is frequently asked to contribute to the *appeal* of, e.g., Canterbury Cathedral for construction repair, or Ely Cathedral to fight the woodworm. *Appeals* also issue from hospitals, schools, charitable institutions and other worthy causes.

**appointed to a cure of souls, Inf.**

**made vicar**

**approach, v.t.****service**

A euphemism hard to match. It manages to obscure what a ram does to a ewe under appropriate conditions.

**approved school****reform school**

See also **Borstal**.

**A.R.** See **recorded delivery**.

**archies, n.****Slang. ack-ack**

*Slang.* World War I for *anti-aircraft guns*. *Ack-ack* became World War II slang in both countries for both the guns and the fire.

**argue the toss****Slang. squabble**

*Slang.* Dispute needlessly.

**argy-bargy****a dispute**

*Inf.* A noisy wrangle. Also used as a verb: *I grew accustomed to hearing them argy-bargy.*

**Army and Navy Stores**

SEE COMMENT

*Army and Navy store* in America is a generic term for a type of shop selling low-priced work and sports clothes, sports and camping equipment, and the like. In London, it is the name of a particular department store selling general merchandise.

**arse, n.****Slang. ass**

*Slang.* The anatomical, not the zoological designation. Neither term is in polite use.

**arse over tip, Slang.****Inf. head over heels****arsy-tarsy, Slang.****Slang. ass-backwards****arsy-versy, adv., Slang.****vice versa; backwards****arterial road****main road**

Synonymous with *major road* and *trunk road*.

**articled clerk.** See **articles**.

**articles, n. pl.****written agreement**

Usually expanded to *articles of agreement*. A common use, in this sense, is in the term *articles of apprenticeship*. As a verb, to *article* is to *bind by articles of apprenticeship*, from which we get the term *articled clerk*, meaning 'apprentice.' That is the common term in the legal profession in Britain (see **clerk, 1**). When one's apprenticeship is ended, one *comes out of articles*. Accountants, too, have *articled clerks*, who, like those in law offices, are on their way to gaining full professional status.

**articulated lorry****trailer truck**

The verb *articulate* has been used so widely as an intransitive verb meaning 'speak clearly' that most people have forgotten that it is also a transitive verb meaning 'connect by joints.' In truck drivers' vernacular, often shortened to *artic* (accented on the second syllable).

**as bright as a new penny, *Inf.***

*Inf.* **as bright as a button**

**as cold as charity**

**biting cold**

*Inf.* Often applied to human attitudes, the allusion being to the coldness of the administrative procedures of many charitable organizations. See also **monkey-freezing**.

**as dead as mutton**

*Inf.* **as dead as a doornail**

Quite dead.

**Asdic, *n.***

**sonar**

Stands for *Anti-Submarine Detection Investigation Committee*. Used in finding and locating submarines and submarine objects.

**as dim as a Toc H lamp**

*Inf.* **thick-headed**

*Inf.* *Toc H* (initials of Talbot House) is an organization for social service and fellowship; so called because it originated at Talbot House, a rest center for soldiers at Poperinghe, Belgium. Talbot House was named for Gilbert Talbot, who was killed in action in 1915. In front of each *Toc H* location hangs a lamp which is always dimly lit. Sometimes a sign with a lamp replaces the lamp itself. The *dim* in this phrase is short for *dim-witted*. *Toc* is the pronunciation of *t* in military signaling.

**as easy as kiss your hand, *Inf.***

*Inf.* **as easy as pie**

**as from**

**as of**

As *from* such-and-such a date, e.g., *The fares will be increased by 10 pence as from December 9.*

**(the) Ashes, *n. pl.***

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* This is a symbolic term meaning 'victory' in test cricket with Australia (see **Test Match**). Thus we have the expressions *win the Ashes*, *retain (or hold) the Ashes*, *bring back (or win back or regain) the Ashes*, etc., depending upon circumstances. When England and Australia play in a test series for *the Ashes* no physical trophy changes hands. Yet after the term came into use, the abstraction did materialize into a pile of physical ashes which are contained in an urn which is in turn contained in a velvet bag, now resting permanently at Lord's Cricket Ground in London.

**as near as dammit**

*Inf.* **just about**

*Slang.* Almost exactly; give or take a bit; very close! *We'll get there at seven, as near as dammit.* Or, *Can we make it in two hours? As near as dammit.* The origin of the phrase is as *near as 'damn it' is to swearing.*

**as near as makes no odds**

*Inf.* **just about**

*Inf.* Sometimes *as near as makes no matter*. Either is the equivalent of *give or take a bit*. For example: *I'll get there at nine, as near as makes no odds*, i.e., so near that it makes no difference.

**as nice as ninepence**

*Inf.* **as nice as pie**

*Inf.* Unexpectedly pleasant and helpful.

**as safe as a bank, *Inf.***

**perfectly safe**

**14 as safe as houses****as safe as houses, *Inf.*****perfectly safe****assessor, *n.*****adjuster**

One who appraises the value of property in an insurance claim.

**assistant, *n.*****clerk; salesman; saleslady***Assistant*, in this British use, is short for *shop assistant*, which usually means a 'salesperson' or 'salesclerk,' but can also mean in a more general sense a 'shop attendant' who may not be there to sell you anything but to help out generally.**assisting the police****held for questioning**Sometimes *assisting in the inquiry*. These euphemisms are coupled with the practice of withholding names in newspaper reports until the persons involved are formally charged.**assizes, *n. pl.*****court sessions**

The periodic sessions of the judges of the superior courts in each county of England and Wales for administering civil and criminal justice.

**Association football (soccer). See football.****as soon as look at you, *Inf.******Inf.* before you can say 'Jack Robinson'****as soon as say knife, *Inf.******Inf.* before you can say 'Jack Robinson'**Also *before you can (could) say knife*.**assurance, *n.*****(life) insurance***Assurance*, not insurance, is the usual term in Britain. The person or firm covered is *the assured*, and the insurance company is the *assurance society*.**as under****as follows**For instance, at the top of a bill for services, one might see, *For professional services as under*.**as well****too**Mostly a matter of preference. *She speaks French as well* would be usual in Britain; *She speaks French, too*, would be more likely in America.**at close of play*****Inf.* when all is said and done***Inf.* More concretely, this phrase can refer to the end of a certain period or to the conclusion of a situation: *Let me have the memorandum by close of play on Wednesday*. One of many expressions taken over from cricket. See also **at the end of the day**.**at half-cock*****Inf.* half-cocked***Inf.* As in the expression *go off at half-cock*, meaning 'take action when only partially ready.'**athletics, *n. pl.*****sports***Athlete*, though used in the broad sense, generally connotes participation in track and field. In a British school one goes *in* for *athletics*, rather than *out* for *sports*.**at risk****in danger**E.g., *If we let this slip by, the whole project will be at risk*.

**at the end of the day**

Expressing the ultimate effect or result of foregoing activity or discussion: *Large housing units may be more efficient, but at the end of the day people want their separate homes. Hard feelings were expressed by both sides, but at the end of the day, they parted friends.* See also **at close of play**.

**when all is said and done****at the crunch**

*Inf. When the chips are down.*

**Inf. in the clutch****at the side of**

*Inf. Used in odious comparisons: She's ugly at the side of her cousin Betty.*

**Inf. alongside; beside****attract, v.t.**

A British bank, answering a customer's letter about its rendering a certain service, wrote: *The work on your enquiry will attract a small charge.* Also used in tax terminology: *This stock will attract capital gains tax rather than income tax. Those wishing to pass on capital to their families without attracting any liability to tax. . . .* (Note to tax rather than for tax; see **Appendix I.A.1.** on preposition usage in Britain.) In this last example, *incur* may be a preferable equivalent and the author of the tax advice might have been better advised to use the word *incurring*, because it is the thing or operation which *attracts* the tax, not the person.

**involve; entail; incur****aubergine, n.****eggplant****au fait**

Fairly common in Britain; sometimes used in America: *he wanted to be made au fait with our condition.*

**Inf. conversant****Aunt Edna**

*Inf. Aunt Edna* is the invented prototypically provincial nice old lady with whom one must be very careful when suggesting reading matter or theatrical entertainment. See also **Wigan**.

**Inf. little old lady from Dubuque****Auntie, n.**

*Slang.* The affectionate nickname for the BBC, synonymous with **the Beeb**. *Auntie* used to be short for *Auntie Times*, meaning *The Times* (of London).

**SEE COMMENT****Auntie Times. See Auntie.****Aunt Sally****1. target****2. Inf. trial balloon**

- Inf.* An *Aunt Sally* is a *butt*, an object of ridicule. The term is derived from the carnival game in which one throws balls at a figure known as *Aunt Sally*.
- Inf.* Since *Aunt Sally* is something set up to be knocked down, it has acquired the meaning of 'trial balloon,' a proposal submitted for criticism.

**au pair****1. SEE COMMENT.****2. giving services for board and lodging**

- (Pronounced OH-PAIR.) This term from French applies generically to service bartering arrangements between two parties, with little or no money changing hands. Two professionals might thus make an *au pair* arrangement. British families also exchange children with foreign families in order to broaden the children's experience, this being another type of *au pair* arrangement.

2. The term is heard generally in the expression *au pair girl* (often called just an *au pair*) and refers to the British custom of a family giving a home to a girl from abroad who helps with the children and the housekeeping. Becoming common in the United States.

**autocue, n.**

**TelePrompter**

Essential devices enabling news-readers (British) and anchorpersons (American) to do their jobs.

**awkward, adj.**

**troublesome; annoying**

Often used in Britain to mean 'difficult,' in the sense of 'hard to deal with,' referring to people who are not easy to get along with.



**baby-watcher, n.**

And *baby-watching* is *baby-sitting*. Cf. **child-minder**.

**baby-sitter**

**back bacon**

*approx.* **Canadian bacon**

**back bench, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Occupied by Members of Parliament not entitled to a seat on the front benches, which are occupied by ministers (cabinet members) and other members of the government and opposition leaders. See also **front bench**; **cross bench**.

**backhander Slang.**

**graft**

Headline *Evening Standard* (London) June 14, 1973:

“‘Corruption’ trial hears of payments to officials: Ex-Mayor Tells of Backhanders to Councillors.” **Councillors** are *councilmen*, demonstrating that Americans did not invent payments under tables.

**backlog, n.**

**overstock**

To a British businessman, *backlog* can mean ‘overstocked inventory,’ an unhappy condition, as well as a heartening accumulation of orders waiting to be filled.

**back-room boy.** See **boffin**.

**back slang**

SEE COMMENT

Slang created by spelling words backwards, a British pastime. Example: *ecilop* is back slang for ‘police’ and the origin of the slang noun *slop* meaning ‘police.’

**back to our muttons**

*Inf.* **back to business**

*Slang.* After an extended digression during a serious discussion: *Well now, back to our muttons*, i.e., ‘Let’s get back to the subject.’

**backwardation, n.**

**penalty for delayed delivery**

A London Stock Exchange term. It consists of a percentage of the selling price payable by the seller of shares for the privilege of delaying delivery of the shares.

**backwoodsman, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* The literal use of this word in Britain is the same as the American an *uncouth person*. Figuratively, a *peer* who rarely, if ever, attends meetings of the House of Lords.

**bad hat, Inf.**

*Inf.* **bad egg**

*Bad egg* is now also heard in Britain to mean an ‘immoral person.’

**bad patch**

*Inf.* **rough time**

*Inf.* When things are not going well with someone, the British say that he is in or going through a *bad patch*; in America he would be described as having a *rough time* (of it). For other idiomatic uses of *patch*, see **patch** and **not a patch on**.

## 18 bad show!

## bad show!

1. *Inf.* tough luck!2. *Slang.* lousy!1. *Inf.* A show of sympathy.2. *Inf.* A rebuke for a poor performance. A *ghastly show* is a terrible mess. See also **good show!****bag a brace.** See **duck.****baggage service****lost and found**Also, *Lost Property Office.***bagging-hook, n.****small scythe**A rustic term synonymous with **swop.****bagman, n.****traveling salesman**This old-fashioned term does not have the abusive meaning of *graft collector*, as in America. In Britain synonymous with **commercial traveller.****bags, n. pl.****slacks***Inf.* *Oxford bags* were a 1920s style characterized by the exaggerated width of the trouser legs.**bags I!***Slang.* **Dibs on . . . ! I dibsy! I claim!***Schoolboy slang.* Sometimes *I bag!* or *I Bags!* or *baggy!* or *bagsy!* *Bags, first innings!* is another variant. *First innings* in this context means a 'first crack at something.' See **first innings.** Examples: *Baggy, no washing up!* (see **wash up**) which would be shouted by a youngster trying to get out of doing the dishes, or *I bag the biggest one!* proclaimed by one of a group of children offered a number of apples or candies of unequal size. **Fains I!** is the opposite of *Bags I!***bags of . . .***Inf.* **piles of . . .***Inf.* Usually in the phrase *bags of money.***bail.**See **wicket; up stumps.**

A cricket term.

**bailiff, n.**1. **sheriff's assistant**2. **estate or farm manager**1. A British *bailiff* is one employed by a sheriff to serve legal papers and make arrests.2. An American *bailiff* is a minor court functionary in the nature of a messenger, usher, etc.**bait, n.***Slang.* **grub (food)**

Food that will entice a wild animal.

**baked custard.** See **custard.****bakehouse, n.****bakery**Where bread is baked, not sold. In Britain, a *bakery* is a place where bread and other baked goods are sold.

**bakers knee**

Inward curvature of the legs, once to have been caused by the constrained position bakers had to take when kneading bread.

**knock-knee****balaam, n.**

*Newspaper slang.* Miscellaneous items to fill newspaper space; set in type and kept in readiness, in a *Balaam-box*. The prophet Balaam could not meet the requirements of Balak, king of Moab, when commanded to curse the Israelites, and the curse became a blessing instead (Num. 22–24). Balaam thus became the prototype of the disappointing prophet or ineffective ally.

**Slang. fillers****Balaclava, n.**

Short for *Balaclava helmet*, which is made of wool and pulled over the head, leaving the face exposed. Balaclava was the site of an important battle of the Crimean War. That war made two other contributions to fashion; the sleeve named for Lord Raglan, who occupied the town of Balaclava, and the sweater which was the invention of the seventh Earl of Cardigan, commander of the famous Light Brigade.

**woolen helmet****(The) ball's in your court**

*Inf.* *The ball's in your court* means 'It is your move now.' A variant is *The ball's at your feet*.

**Inf. It's up to you****ballocks, n. pl.**

*Vulgar.* Probably the origin of the phrase *all ballocksed* (also *bollixed*) *up*, a variation on *all balled up*.

**Vulgar. balls****balls, n. pl.****1. Slang. crap (nonsense)****2. Inf. mess**

1. *Slang.* This word is used by itself, as a vulgar expletive, in America. In Britain it appears in expressions like *That's a lot of balls*, i.e., *stuff and nonsense*.

2. *Slang.* To make a *balls* of something is to make a *mess* of it, to *louse it up*. A variant of *balls* in this sense is *balls-up*. The familiar expressions to *ball up* (a situation) and *all balled up* are echoes of this usage. Synonymous with *balls* and *balls-up* in this sense are **cock** and **cock-up**.

**bally, adj., adv.**

*Slang.* (Rhymes with SALLY.) Expressing disgust, like **bloody**. But it can, by a kind of reverse English, express the exact opposite, i.e., satisfaction, as in: *We bet on three races and won the bally lot*. *Bally* is virtually obsolete.

**Slang. damned****band, n.**

Tax term.

**bracket****B & B**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Short for *Bed and Breakfast*. Sight seen on British roadsides pointing the way, most often, to pleasant and inexpensive lodgings and a satisfying meal next morning, including amiable chatter.

**bandit-proof, adj.**

*Bulletproof* is also used in Britain.

**bulletproof**

20 **bandy-legged****bandy-legged**, *adj.**Inf.* **bowlegged***Inf.* Referring to persons, and occasionally used also in America. When describing furniture, the British use *bowlegged*.**bang**, *adv.***absolutely**"She was *bang* wrong." See also **bang on**.**banger**, *n.***1. sausage****2. Slang. jalopy****3. firecracker****1. Slang.** Derived from the tendency of sausages to burst open with a *bang* in the frying pan. See also **slinger**.**2. Slang.** Derived from the backfire emitted by old heaps.**3. Schoolboy slang.****bang off**, *Slang**Inf.* **pronto**

Immediately; right now.

**bang on***Inf.* **right on the nose***Slang.* Exactly as planned or predicted. Literally, *bang on target*, of World Wars I and II vintage. Synonymous with **dead on**. See also **bang**; **dead on**; **spot-on**.**bang-up**, *adj.***swell**Fine, first-rate: "*They did a bang-up job.*"**(the) Bank**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

Always capitalized, it means the 'Bank of England,' Britain's central bank, which presides over the financial system as a whole.

**banker's order****money transfer order**

Written instructions filed with one's bank for the making of periodic payments to a third party, such as mortgage payments, alimony payments, and other obligations you had better not default on. This is common practice in Britain, rare in America. The American equivalent given above is not a term in common banking usage.

**bank holiday**, *n.***legal holiday**Also used as an adjective, as in *bank-holiday Monday*. *Bank holidays* were introduced in 1871.**bank note**. See **note**.**bant**, *v.i.***diet**To *bant* is to *diet*. Dr. W. Banting, who died in 1878, originated a treatment for overweight based on abstinence from sugar, starch, etc. His name became and remained the name of this dieting procedure. Rare today.**bap**, *n.***hamburger roll or bun**

Somewhat larger than the customary American variety. Originated in Scotland and the North Country; now common in London. The roll is slightly sweet, very tasty, and large enough to be cut in strips for toasting.

**bar**, *n.* See **lounge bar**; **pub**.

**bar**, *v.t.*

*approx.* **loathe**

*Slang.* When you *bar* something, you exclude it from consideration.

**bar**, *prep.*

**but**; **except**

Heard especially in "*bar none*," meaning excepting none.

A special usage is found in horse racing, where, after the favorites' odds are posted, they put up an entry headed **BAR**, followed by odds, e.g., **BAR 20/1**. Here, *bar* is short for *bar the favorites* and means that each of the remaining horses in the rest of the field is at 20 to 1. Sometimes one sees *20/1 bar one* or *20/1 bar two* (or *three*, etc.) which means the field are all at 20 to 1, and you then have to inquire about the *one* or *two* (or *three*, etc.) who are not in the field, i.e., the favorites, and get their odds from those in charge.

**bar billiards**. See **billiard-saloon**.

**bargain**, *n.*

**stock market transaction**

The ominous phrase *unable to comply with their bargains*, usually found in newspaper and radio reports of bankruptcies (especially in the matter of stock exchange firms), comes out in America as *unable to meet their debts*. However it's said, it's extremely bad news.

**barge-pole**, *n.*

**ten-foot pole**

A Briton who wishes to express an aversion toward another person or a business proposal *would not touch it or him with a barge-pole*. Another object left unused by the British in the same connection is a *pair of tongs*.

**barman**

**bartender**

The British also say *bartender*. The female British counterpart is a *barmaid*.

**barmy**, *adj.*

*Inf.* **balmy**

*Slang.* Off one's rocker.

**barney** *n.*, *Slang.*

**squabble**

**baronet**, *n.*

**(hereditary) knight**

Member of the lowest hereditary order. *Sir* precedes the name; *Baronet* (usually abbreviated to *Bart.*, sometimes *Bt.*) follows it: *Sir John Smith, Bart.* See also **Dame**; **Lady**; **K.**; **Lord**.

**baron of beef**. See under **sirloin**.

**barrack**

1. *Slang.* **boo**

2. **root for**

1. *Slang.* To demonstrate noisily in a public place, like a stadium or a theater, against a team, a player, or a performer; to *jeer*; to *hoot*.

2. *Slang.* In the proper context, *barrack* can mean just the opposite, i.e., to 'root for' a team or player.

**barrage**, *n.*

**dam**

The two countries share the other more common meanings, military and figurative, of this word, but even in those cases the British accent the first syllable, as

they do in *garage*, and soften the *g* to *ZH*. In the special British meaning of a 'dam in a watercourse,' the accent stays the same but the *g* sound is hardened to *J*, as in *jump*.

**barrel, n.**

Weight unit. See **Appendix II.C.1.a**.

**barrier, n.**

Railroad term meaning the 'gate' through which one passes to and from the platform. A guard standing at the *barrier* collects your ticket (or glances at it again if it is a *season ticket* or round-trip ticket) as you leave. Occasionally, a *ticket inspector* will range through first class compartments to root out passengers traveling on second class tickets, and collect the difference in fares.

**barrister, n.**

**trial lawyer**

A *barrister* is also known as *counsel*. Apart from serving as *trial lawyers*, *barristers* are resorted to by **solicitors** (*general practitioners*) for written expert opinions in special fields of the law. The *solicitor* is the person the client retains. The *solicitor* retains the *barrister* or *counsel*. The *solicitor* can try cases in certain inferior courts. The *barrister-solicitor* dichotomy is a legal institution in Britain. It exists in practice in America, where, technically, any attorney may try cases, but most practitioners resort to trial counsel in litigated matters. See also **brief; called to the bar; chambers; solicitor**.

**barrow, n.**

**pushcart**

This word means 'pushcart' when referring to a street vendor. In gardening, it is the equivalent of *wheelbarrow*, which is also used in Britain. See also **trolley**. **Pushcart** is sometimes used in Britain to mean 'baby carriage'; but usually means 'handcart.'

**Bart.** See **Baronet**.

**base rate**

**prime rate**

Banking term.

**bash, n., v.t.**

**Inf. bang (hit)**

**Inf.** All too common in the extremely unpleasant terms *Paki-bashing* and *wogbashing*. See **Paki** and **wog**. See also the amusing usage of the word in **have a bash at**.

**basin, n.**

**sink**

*Basin* is used when referring to the fixture in any room other than the kitchen. **Sink** is used in Britain when referring to a kitchen fixture. Sometimes *wash-basin*.

**basket, n.**

**Slang. bastard**

**Slang.** A euphemism, especially when addressing someone, and in the phrase *little basket*, describing a particularly naughty child.

**bat.** See **carry one's bat; off one's own bat; play a straight bat; batsman**.

**bat first**

**go first**

**Inf.** *Start the ball rolling*; a term borrowed from cricket. Synonymous with **take first knock**.

**bath**, *n., v.t., v.i.*1. **bathtub**2. **bathe**

1. In Britain, as in America, one can *take a bath*, although in Britain one usually *has*, rather than *takes*, a *bath*. One sits or soaks in the *bath* in Britain rather than in the *bathtub*, as in America. Showers are much less common than they are in America.

2. As a verb, *bath* is used like *bathe* in America: one can *bath* the baby (give it a bath) or, simply *bath* (take a bath). See also **bathe**.

**bath bun**

SEE COMMENT

A type of *sweet bun* which is filled with small seedless raisins called **sultanas** and candied citrus rinds, and has a glazed top studded with coarse grains of white sugar. The term occasionally has the slang meaning of 'old bag,' i.e., 'crone.'

**bath chair**, *n.***wheelchair**

Sometimes the *b* is capitalized, showing derivation from the city of Bath where they originated. Also called **invalid's chair** and **wheeled chair**.

**bath chap****pig's cheek**

A butcher's term. *Chap* is a variant of *chop*. The pig's cheek is usually smoked.

**bathe**, *n.***swim**

In Britain one *swims* in the sea, but one also takes a *bathe* in the sea where Americans used to have a dip. See also **bath**; **front**; **sea**.

**bathing costume****bathing suit**

Sometimes *bathing dress* or *swimming costume*. *Bathing dress* used to be confined to women's outfits. All these terms are rather old-fashioned. In Britain today *bathing suit* and *swimsuit* are generally used and apply to either sex.

**Bath Oliver**

SEE COMMENT

A type of cookie or **biscuit** invented by Dr. W. Oliver (d. 1764) of the city of Bath. It is about an eighth of an inch thick, dry and sweetish—not quite as sweet as an American graham cracker. See also **biscuit**; **digestive biscuits**.

**batman**, *n.***military officer's servant****baton**, *n.**Inf.* **billy**; **nightstick**

(Accent on the first syllable.) Also called a **truncheon**. Carried by policemen.

**batsman**, *n.*(baseball) **batter**

Cricket vs. baseball. The British say *fielder* or *fieldsman*, but never *batter*. Generally, *batsman* is shortened to *bat*: *Clive is a fine bat!* See also **bat first**; **carry one's bat**; **off one's own bat**; **play a straight bat**.

**Battersea box**

SEE COMMENT

Cylindrical or bottle-shaped little enameled copper case with decorated hinged top, typically for perfume, bonbons, etc. The authentic antique boxes were produced at Battersea, a part of London, for only a few years (1753–56) and are rare and expensive. Good copies are being made today with traditional or new designs.

**BBC English**

SEE COMMENT

The reference is to the speech of the announcers which is considered by some to be the standard pronunciation of English. This situation has changed since the BBC started employing announcers from different parts of the country, especially the Midlands and Scotland, who don't necessarily speak *R.P.*, which stands for **Received Pronunciation**. The label *BBC English* can, in certain contexts, be pejorative. To say of someone that he has a BBC accent may imply that he has worked very hard to lose his own, indicating social climbing rather than "culture." See also **Received Pronunciation**.

**beach, n.****gravel**

When a Briton wants to close up a ditch with *fill* or *gravel* he may use *beach*. (When he wants to swim at the beach, he goes to the **sea** or *seaside*.)

**beadle. See bumble.****beak, n.****1. schoolmaster****2. magistrate**

*Slang.* No precise American slang for either meaning.

**beaker, n.****cup or mug**

In both tongues, a *beaker* is also a favorite piece of glassware for chemists and chemistry students. But in everyday parlance, a man who asked for a refill of his *cup* or *mug* would be in a United States diner, not in Great Britain.

**bean, n.****1. Inf. cent****2. Slang. pep****3. Slang. hell****4. Slang. guy; fellow**

1. *Slang.* *I haven't a bean* means 'I'm broke.'

2. *Slang.* *Full of beans* means 'full of pep.'

3. *Slang.* To *give someone beans* is to *give someone hell* or to *punish him*.

4. *Slang.* In the expression *old bean*, rather outmoded and more likely to be encountered in P.G. Wodehouse than in current speech.

**bean-feast, n.****company picnic**

*Inf.* Also called a **beano** (*slang*). Apparently, pork and beans (in Britain **beans** and **bacon**) were considered an indispensable element of the annual company celebration. The term has been extended to mean informally any merry occasion.

**beano. See bean-feast.****beans and bacon****pork and beans****bearskin, n.**

SEE COMMENT

High fur hat worn by the Brigade of **Guards**; much higher than a **busby**. Also any article of clothing made of fur.

**beastly, adj., adv.****1. unpleasant****2. terribly (very)****beat up***Inf.* **pick up**

*Inf.* In the sense of 'picking somebody up,' by prearrangement, to go somewhere together. Thus an official might *beat up* recruits in a town in order to supply his

quota of new troops. You and I might also decide to *beat up some grub at the diner*, that is, go to the railway dining-car for dinner.

**beck**, *n.*

**brook**

**bed and breakfast**

*Slang.* **wash sale**

*Slang.* In addition to its standard meaning of 'sleeping accommodations with breakfast thrown in,' this term has a slang meaning in tax law, describing the sale of securities to establish a tax loss followed by an immediate repurchase of the same securities. This wash sale scheme was ruled out in American capital gain taxation years ago, but not until April 1975 in Britain.

**bed bath**

**sponge bath**

Synonymous with **blanket bath**.

**bed-board**, *n.*

**headboard**

**bedding**, *n., adj.*

**annuals**

A single annual plant is called a *bedder*. Americans are occasionally surprised to see *bedding* advertised for sale in plant nurseries. Also used as an adjective, as in *bedding plants*.

**bed-sitter**, *n.*

**one room apartment**

*Inf.* *Bed-sitting room*, meaning a 'combination bedroom-living room'; usually called *bedsit* when referring to a room in a hotel. It does not have its own bathroom. If one is included, the unit becomes a *studio*. Bedsits bespeak hard times, a transient's existence, poverty, student and artist life. *Bedsit* is also a verb, meaning to 'occupy a bedsit.'

**(the) Beeb**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Affectionate nickname for the BBC, synonymous with **Auntie**.

**beefeater**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

A *warder* (guard) of the Tower of London. They are dressed in ornately decorated red uniforms and distinctively shaped top hats, dating from the fifteenth century. For illustration (if you can't get to the Tower), see the label on a bottle of a popular gin. The Tower of London, originally a royal fortress and palace, became a prison and the *warders* thus became *jailers*. Nowadays, the Tower, a huge collection of buildings housing many objects of historical interest, including the crown jewels, is crawling with tourists, and the *beefeaters* are its official guides, knowledgeable and literate, who take groups around, dispensing history and wit in large doses.

**beer and skittles**

*Inf.* **a bed of roses**

*Inf.* *Skittles* being, literally, a ninepins game, *beer and skittles* would seem to be an apt phrase for *fun and games, high amusement*. Almost always used in the negative: *Life is not all beer and skittles, or, This job is not all beer and skittles.*

**beetle-crusher**, *n.*

**large boot**

**beetle off**

*Inf.* **take off**

*Slang.* Sometimes without the *off*: *It was warm, so we beetled (off) to the sea.*

**beetroot, n.****beet(s)**

The table vegetable known in America as *beet* is always called *beetroot* in Britain. *Beetroot* does not add an *s* in the plural. *Beet*, in Britain, describes a related plant, the root of which is white, not red, used for either the feeding of cattle or the making of sugar, and usually called *sugar beet*.

**before you can say knife.** See **as soon as say knife.**

**beggar, n.****Slang. guy; son of a gun**

*Slang.* The British use *beggar* literally, as we do. They also use it figuratively, in a pejorative sense, to describe an unsavory character, as in, *a miserable beggar*; or favorably, to convey admiration, as in, *a plucky little beggar*.

**behindhand, adj.****behind**

As in, *a maid behindhand with her housework*. Also *behindhand in my mortgage payments*.

**Belisha beacon****street crossing light**

(Pronounced BE-LEE'-SHA). Ubiquitous post topped by a flashing yellow globe to designate pedestrian crossing. They come in pairs, one on each side of the street, usually reinforced by stripes running across the road (see **zebra**).

**bell, n.****Inf. ring**

*Slang.* To *give someone a bell* is to *give him a ring*, i.e., call him up. Criminal and police cant.

**below the salt.** See **above the salt.**

**belt, n.****girdle**

*Belt* started out as a shortening of what in America would be known as a *garter belt* and in Britain as a *suspender belt* (see **braces; suspenders**). But then *belt* became generic for anything used by ladies to support bulging parts of the anatomy and the equivalent of the American term *girdle*, which is now also widely heard in Britain.

**belted earl ( or knight)****SEE COMMENT**

All earls and knights are *belted*, i.e., theoretically they wear sword belts. These are affectionate terms, like *noble lord* (all lords are *noble*) and *gracious duke* (all dukes are *Your Grace*.)

**belt up!****Slang. shut up!**

*Slang.* The British also say **pack it up!** or **put a sock in it!**

**be mum****pour (the tea)**

*Inf.* Or the coffee. *I'll be mum* or, *Who's going to be mum?* evokes the image of cozy family groups, with a kindly, beaming mom officiating, but it is used jocularly in entirely male groups and even in such strongholds of masculinity as the wardroom of an oil tanker. Also, *be mother*.

**bend, n.****curve**

Referring to roads and used on road signs. A *double bend* is an *S curve*. For a different use, see **round the bend**.

**bender, n.**

1. SEE COMMENT

2. trailer truck

1. *Slang*. The old *sixpence*. See **Appendix II.A.**

2. *Slang*. Synonymous with *artic*, short slang for **articulated lorry**.

**bent, adj., Slang.**

1. crooked; dishonest

2. homosexual

**be quiet! interj.**

*Inf.* keep still!

In this context, the British do not use *still* in the sense of 'keeping one's mouth shut.' *Keep still* would be understood to mean 'Don't move.'

**berk, n.**

*approx. Slang.* **dope**

*Slang*. A fool who is also unpleasant. This word is heard in mixed company, but mightn't be if its origin were known. It is a shortening of *Berkeley* (pronounced *Barkley*), which is short for *Berkeley Hunt*, which is rhyming slang for *cunt*.

**berm, n.**

**shoulder**

Of a road. Originally, a terrace between a moat and the bottom of a parapet. See also **verge**.

**Berwick cockles**

SEE COMMENT

Not cockles at all, but shell-shaped mints made at Berwick-on-Tweed since 1801.

**be sick**

**throw up**

See **sick**.

**besot, v.t.**

1. stupefy; muddle

2. infatuate

In America, the principal meaning of *besot* is to 'get (someone) drunk,' to 'intoxicate,' so that *besotted* would usually be taken to mean 'drunk' or 'druken.' The context of intoxicating liquor is absent in the British usage.

**bespoke, adj.**

**made to order; custom made**

Used in the phrases *bespoke clothes*, *bespoke tailor*, etc.

**(the) best of British luck!**

*Inf.* lotsa luck!

*Inf.* Said with heavy irony and implying very bad times ahead indeed.

**best offer**

**at the market**

When you want to tell your stockbroker to sell *at the market* in England, you tell him to sell **best offer**. This instruction permits him to unload at the bid price.

**bethel, n.**

**chapel**

A **dissenters' chapel**: also their meeting-house; sometimes *seamen's church*, whether afloat or on *terra firma*. Also called, at times, a *bethesda* or a *beulah*.

**betterment levy**

**improvement assessment**

Increase in your property taxes (**rates**) when you improve your property.

**between whiles**

**in between**

In the interval between other actions.

**beyond the next turning.** See **block**.

**b.f.** *Slang.* **goddamned fool**  
*Slang.* Stands for *bloody fool* (See **bloody**.) The *b.f.* is not to be confused with the proofreaders' mark for *boldface*, which is simplified to *bold* in Britain.

**bib-overall, n.** SEE COMMENT  
 Overalls with a solid front top, known as a 'bib.'

**bickie, n.** **cracker**  
*Inf.* Nursery word for **biscuit**.

**big bug.** See **insect**.

**big dipper** **roller coaster**  
 Synonymous with **switchback**.

**Big Four** SEE COMMENT  
 This is the short name for the four big banks in Britain, which handle the overwhelming bulk of personal and corporate accounts: National Westminster, Barclays, Lloyds, and Midland. There used to be five, until the National Provincial merged into the Westminster.

**big pot.** See **pot, 3**.

**bike.** See **motor-bike**.

**bill, n.** **check**  
 In Britain one asks the waiter for his *bill*, rather than his *check*. (The Briton might pay his *bill* by **cheque**.)

**bill broker** **discounter; factor**  
 One engaged in the business of discounting notes and other negotiable instruments.

**billiard-saloon, n.** *approx.* **billiard parlor; poolroom**  
 The game of *pool* in Britain has a set of rules quite different from *pool* (or *straight pool*) as the term is understood in America, where there are many variations of the game, each with its own set of rules. *Bar billiards* is a British game, played with balls and cues, on a table much smaller than a standard American table, and a bar-billiards table is a frequent and thoroughly enjoyable adornment of British pubs.

**billingsgate, n.** **coarse invective**  
 Foul language characteristic of a person known as *fishwife*. The term, like the word *fishwife* in the derogatory sense, stems from Billingsgate Market, the former London fish market famous for its foul language.

**billion, adj., n.** See **Appendix II.D**.

**bill of quantity** **cost estimate**  
 Especially in the building contracting business.

**Billy Butlin's.** See **Butlin's**.

**billycock.** See **bowler**, 1.

**bin**, *n.*

**hop sack**

Made of canvas and used in hop-picking. But *bin* has many other uses: see **bread bin**; **orderly bin**; **waste bin**; **litter bin**; **dustbin**; **skivvy-bin**; **bin ends**.

**bind**, *n., v.t., v.i.*

*n., v.t., bore*

*Inf.* A *bind* is a *bore*, whether referring to a person or a job. As a *v.t.*, to *bind* someone is to *bore him stiff*. In Britain, the victim can be said to be bored *stiff*, *solid*, or *rigid*.

**bin ends**

SEE COMMENT

Wine merchants keep their supplies of bottled wine in separate *bins* according to label. When the contents of a number of bins run low, suppliers often offer bargains in *bin ends*, i.e., the few remaining cases of certain labels in order to empty those bins and refill them with the same or other labels.

**bint**, *n.*

**girlfriend**

*Slang.* From the Arabic word for *daughter*, adopted by British soldiers in the Middle East in World War I. It can have the less sinister meaning of 'floozy,' in British spelled *floozie* or *floosie*. See **bird**.

**bird**, *n.*

*Slang.* **dame**

*Slang.* Now much more commonly used than **bint**. Synonyms **bint**; **bit of fluff**; **Judy**. For a wholly unrelated use, see **give (someone) the bird**.

**birl**, *v.t., v.i.*

**spin**

*Birling* is a lumberjack's game which tests the players' ability to stay afloat in a river on logs rotated by their feet. In America, to *birl* is to make the log rotate, but in Britain it has the more general meaning of causing something to rotate, i.e., to spin it, or just to move it quickly. The British use *birl* as an informal noun to mean 'try' or 'gamble,' like *whirl* in the expression *give it a whirl*.

**biro**, *n.*

**ball-point pen**

*Inf.* (Pronounced BUY'-RO.) A generic use of the trademark of the original ball-point pen, named after its Hungarian inventor.

**Birthday Honours**

SEE COMMENT

A miscellany of titles and distinctions, hereditary and otherwise, conferred on the sovereign's birthday, including *knight* (the female equivalent is *dame*), *baron*, O.B.E. (*Officer of the Order of the British Empire*), M.B.E. (*Member of the Order of the British Empire*), C.H. (*Companion of Honour*), P.C. (*Privy Councillor*). In the case of Elizabeth II, Birthday Honours are conferred on her *official birthday*, June 13. Her real birthday is April 21, but to provide (presumably) more clement weather for outdoor royal festivities, particularly **trooping the colour(s)** at the Horse Guards in London, it was shifted to June 13. Titles are also conferred on New Year's Day and at other times at the request of a retiring Prime Minister.

**biscuit**, *n.*

**cracker; cookie**

*Biscuit*, in Britain, covers both *cookie* and *cracker*, depending upon the circumstances. One is offered *sweet biscuits* (cookies) with tea, and unsweetened ones

(crackers) with cheese. To get cookies in Britain, specify *sweet biscuits*, *tea biscuits*, or even *petits fours*. If you ask for *crackers*, you may get firecrackers, or explosive bonbons or snappers, the kind used at children's parties.

**(a) bit missing***Inf. not all there*

*Slang.* In the sense of 'feeble-minded'; lacking certain of one's marbles.

**bit of a knock, Slang.***Slang tough break***bit of fluff***Slang. piece of ass*

*Bit of* is prefixed to various slang terms for *available woman*, which is probably the origin of the elliptical use of *bit* to mean *gal*. See also **bit of goods**; **bit of stuff**.

**bit of goods***Slang. number*

*Slang.* An attractive *bit of goods* in Britain would be *quite a number* or *quite a dish* in America. See **bit of fluff**.

**bit of spare***sex session*

*Slang.* Used in expressions like *he was always after a bit of spare*.

**bit of stuff.** See **bit of fluff**.

**bitter, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Bitter* is used as a noun to mean highly flavored beer (as opposed to mild beer). See also **pint**.

**(a) bit thick, adj.***Slang. going too far*

*Slang.* The expression *a bit thick* appears in America sometimes as *a bit much*, but the more common expression in America is *going too far*.

**black, v.t.****1. shine****2. boycott**

1. Referring to shoes. See also **boot**.

2. *Slang.* Describes the interference, presumably on union instructions, by employees of one company with the industrial activities of another company in order to exert pressure in labor disputes. To *black* a firm is to refuse to handle its goods or deliver to it. The term is derived from *blacklist*.

**black-beetle, n.****cockroach**

Entomologically speaking, a black-beetle is not a beetle at all.

**blackleg, n., Slang.***Slang. scab (strikebreaker)***Black or white?****Black or regular?**

How do you take your coffee? *Black* needs no explanation; *white* in Britain means 'mixed with hot milk.' Americans who don't want it *black* add cream or milk (cold in either case) to their coffee. The British hostess or waitress usually holds the pot of coffee in one hand and the pitcher (**jug**, in Britain) of hot milk in the other, and inquires, *Black or white?* The British system would appear to be universal outside North America. An American hostess might ask, *With or without?* instead of, *Black or regular?*

**Black Paper.** See **Paper**.

**Blackpool, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Blackpool is a seaside resort reminiscent of Coney Island, and used symbolically in the same way. Also famous for T.U.C. (Trades Union Congress) annual conferences often held there.

**black spot**

1. accident spot

2. trouble spot

Sometimes spelled *blackspot*. This is, unfortunately, a common road sign now and also used metaphorically to mean a 'danger area' or 'trouble spot.' Thus, in a discussion of the unemployment situation, the reporter referred to a certain industry as a *black spot*.

**blanco, n.**

whitener

*Inf.* A dressing for buckskin or canvas shoes or sneakers. Also for military webbing equipment, like belts. In the army, it can come in various shades of buff or khaki. In the other services, it is white. It comes in the form of a solid dusty block, which is moistened and then rubbed on whatever needs smartening. White *blanco* is still used by the **Guards** regiment before ceremonial occasions for cleaning belts and rifle slings. See also **clean**. *Blanco* is also used as a verb.

**blanket bath**

sponge bath

A bath given to one who is bedridden. Also called **bed bath**.

**blast!, interj.**

Slang. damn it!; rats!

Slang. See **bother**.

**bleeding, adj.**

Slang. damned; goddamned

Slang. One of the many vulgar euphemisms for the vulgar **bloody**. See **blooming**; **blinking**; **bally**; **ruddy**; **flipping**; **flaming**.

**blether (blather), v.i.**

talk nonsense on and on

With an -s added, it becomes a plural noun meaning 'nonsense.' The vowel changes to *i* in *blithering idiot*, a hopeless fool. See also **haver**; **waffle**.

**blighter, n.**

Slang. character; pain; pest

Slang. This word originally described a person of such low character as to *blight* his surroundings; now not quite so pejorative, it has its approximate equivalent in a number of American slang terms of which the above are only a few. Can be used in a favorable sense, as in *lucky blighter*.

**blighty, n.**

approx. God's country

Slang. British soldiers used this word to mean 'back home,' especially after military service abroad, in the same way that the Americans are glad to get back to *God's country* after being abroad. It is derived from *bilayati*, a Hindustani word meaning 'foreign' and was brought back to their own *blighty* by British soldiers returning from service in India. In World War I it was also used to describe a wound serious enough to warrant a soldier's return home: a *blighty* one.

**blimey!, interj.**

Slang. holy mackerel!

Slang This vulgar interjection is a contraction of *Cor blimey!* or *Gor blimey!* which are distortions of *God blind me!* See also **lumme!**

32 **blimp****blimp**, *n.**Inf.* **stuffed shirt***Inf.* A pompous, elderly stick-in-the-mud, from a David Low cartoon character, Colonel Blimp, a retired officer.**blind**, *n., v.i., adj.*1. *n.*, **window shade**2. *n.*, *Slang.* **bender**3. *adj.*, *Slang.* **damned**1. In America, *blind* is usually restricted to a venetian blind or some type of shutter.2. *n.*, *Slang.* A session of excessive drinking.3. *adj.*, *Slang.* As in *I don't know a blind thing about it!* i.e. *I know nothing about it.***blinking**, *adj., adv.**Slang.* **damned***Slang.* Euphemism for **bloody**: *He's a blinking fool.***block**, *n.***large building***A block of flats is an apartment house; an office block is an office building; a tower block is a high rise. In America, block is used to describe an area, usually rectangular, bounded by four streets. In the next block, to a Briton, would mean in the next apartment house or office building. In giving directions, the British equivalent would be beyond the next turning. It appears, however, that the influence of American visitors is having an increasing effect in bringing block, in the American sense, into British usage. See also apartment; flat.***block of ice****ice cube**

Obsolete. The American term, hyphenated, appears to have won out.

**bloke**, *n.**Slang.* **guy***Slang.* See also **chap**; **guy**. *My bloke means my boy friend; my fellow.***bloody**, *adj., adv.*1. *adj.*, *Slang.* **lousy; contemptible**2. *adv.*, *Slang.* **damned; goddamned***Slang.* This word is now commonly used as an adverb intensifier modifying a pejorative adjective, as in *It's bloody awful*. Used as an adjective, its nearest equivalent in America would be *lousy*, as in the phrase *a bloody shame*. *Bloody*, once regarded as a lurid oath, was formerly proscribed in mixed company, but that sort of inhibition is waning nowadays. Despite popular belief, there is no sound reason to suppose that it is derived from *by Our Lady*. See **bleeding**; **blooming**; **blinking**; **bally**; **ruddy**; **flipping**; **flaming**. As to British swearing habits generally, *damn* is less objectionable in Britain than in America, in polite circles, and *darn* is practically obsolete in Britain. Americans are freer with religious names like *Christ* and *Jesus* and deformations like *Jeez*, but *Crikey* (from *Christ*), originally an oath, is now common as an exclamation of surprise, and sometimes of admiration.**bloody-minded**, *adj.**Inf.* **pigheaded; stubborn***Inf.* Willfully difficult; stubbornly obstructive; cantankerous. An awkward but useful adjective to describe persons you simply can't cope with.**bloomer**, *n.**Slang.* **booboo***Slang.* Synonymous with *blunder*, and sounds like the American slang term *blooper*, which, however, is generally reserved for an embarrassing public booboo.

**blooming**, *adj., adv.**Inf.* **damned***Inf.* Euphemism for the intensifier **bloody**, like **blinking**, **bally**, **ruddy**, etc.**Bloomsbury**, *n., adj.*

1. SEE COMMENT

2. *approx.* **highbrow**

1. Bloomsbury is the name of a section of West Central London where writers and artists, students and aesthetes generally lived and gathered in the early part of this century. There was a *Bloomsbury set* which included people like Virginia and Leonard Woolf and Lytton Strachey, and others in or on the fringes of the arts, and there was a *Bloomsbury accent*.

2. The name became generally descriptive of that sort of person and atmosphere, and developed into an adjective roughly equivalent to *intellectual* or *highbrow*.

**blot one's copybook***Inf.* **spoil one's record***Inf.* To mar an otherwise perfect record by committing an act of indiscretion.**blower**, *n.***telephone**

*Slang.* Sometimes referred to in American slang as the *horn*. *Blow* is sometimes used as a noun meaning a 'call' or 'ring' on the telephone as in *If you have any trouble, just give me a blow*.

**blowlamp**, *n.***blowtorch**Sometimes *blowflame*. Also called **brazing lamp**.**(be) blown**, *v.***(be) found out***Inf.* Can be said of a person, as well as a spy's cover or any spurious identity.**blow (someone) up****blow up at (someone)**

To *blow* someone *up* is to *blow up* at someone, or to *let him have it*, and a *blowing-up* is what you let him have!

**blow the gaff**. See **gaff**.**blue**, *n.***letter; letter man**

A man who wins his *letter* and becomes a *letter man* in America wins his *blue* and becomes a *blue* at Oxford or Cambridge. At London University he wins his *purple* and becomes a *purple*, and it appears that other universities award other colors; but neither *purple* nor any other color compares even faintly with the distinction of a *blue*. Oxford *blue* is dark blue; Cambridge *blue* is light blue. A *double-blue* is a *two-letter man*; a *triple-blue* is a *three-letter man*. The sport in which the British athlete represents his university (makes the team, in America) determines whether he earns a *full blue* or a *half blue*. Cricket, crew, rugger, and soccer are *full blue* sports. Tennis, lacrosse, and hockey are *half blue* sports. A *blue* can be a *full blue* or a *half blue*.

**blue**, *v.t.**Slang.* **blow (squander)**

*Slang.* Past tense is *blued*, in America *blew*. *Blue* is apparently a variant of *blow*, which is used as well in Britain for *squander*.

**blue book****legislative report**In Britain, a parliamentary or privy-council publication. See also **Hansard**.

**blue-eyed boy, Inf.****Inf. fair-haired boy****Blue Paper.** See **Paper.****BM** SEE COMMENT

The *British Museum*, very frequently abbreviated thus (without periods). The great BM library is now officially called the *British Library*.

**board, n.****sign**

For instance, a TO LET *board*. See also **notice board**; **hoarding**.

**boarder, n.****resident student**

As opposed to a *day student*, who lives at home. It applies to secondary school, not university. *Boarder* in the American sense is *lodger* in Britain. Cf. **P.G.**

**boater, n.****straw hat****(the) Boat Race**SEE COMMENT

The annual rowing race between Oxford and Cambridge. A sporting event of interest to the British public generally, including many who have not had the benefit of any university attendance. There are lots of boat races, but *The Boat Race* is so understood as the race between Oxford and Cambridge.

**bob, n.**SEE COMMENT

*Slang*. One shilling, the former British monetary unit until decimalization. See **Appendix II.A.**

**bob-a-job?****any odd job?**

British Boy Scouts came to the door once a year during Bob-a-Job-Day and asked *Bob-a-job?* You were supposed to find (or invent) a household chore the good young man or men would perform for a *bob* (slang for *shilling*). The proceeds were turned over to the organization for the doing of good works. To indicate the effects of monetary inflation, the special day has now become a week in length.

**bobby, n.*****Slang. cop***

*Slang*. Named for Sir Robert (Bobby) Peel, Home Secretary, who founded the Metropolitan Police Force in 1829. A former slang term in Britain for *cop*, also named after Sir Robert, was *peeler*, which is, however, still heard in Ireland. *Copper* is another less common slang term for *cop*, which is also used in America but seems to have gone out of fashion. *Robert* (from the same Sir Robert) was another British term for *cop*. See **constable**; **P.C.**; **bogey**; **busies**; **pointsmen**; **slop**.

**bobby-dazzler, n.****something special**

*Inf.* Anything or anybody outstanding; often applied to a particularly spiffy dresser.

**Bob's your uncle!*****Inf. there you are! you're done!***

*Inf.* An expression used at the end of instructions such as road directions, recipes, and the like. For example: *Go about 100 yards, take the first turning on your right, then straight on through a little gate; go 40 yards to a gate on your left marked Main Entrance, but that's not really the main entrance (they just call it that, I haven't a clue why), but 20 yards farther on there's a small gate on your right that really is the*

*main entrance; go through that, you'll see a dismal brown building on your left and—Bob's your uncle! Or: . . . add a few cloves, stir for five minutes, turn down the flame, let simmer for an hour or so, and—Bob's your uncle! One explanation of this curious phrase is its alleged use in Robert Peel's campaign for a seat in Parliament. He was a "law and order" man nicknamed Bob (see **bobby**) and uncle was used as a term implying benefaction and protection: Vote for Bob—Bob's your Uncle! Maybe.*

**bod**, *n.*

*Slang. character*

*Slang.* An abbreviation of *body* and somewhat pejorative. Example: *I saw some-bodys who seemed to be a night watchman or some other type of lowly bod about the premises.*

**bodkin**, *n.*

**tape needle**

In Britain the commonest meaning is that of a thick, unpointed needle having a large eye for drawing tape or ribbon through a hem or a loop. Another meaning in Britain and America is to designate a large and elaborate hatpin, but most of those went out of fashion in Edwardian times.

**bodyline**, *adj.*

SEE COMMENT

Usually in the expression *bodyline bowling*. In **cricket**, *bowling* is the overhand delivery of the ball (see **bowler**, 2.) to the **batsman** (*batter*), who must *defend his wicket* (keep the ball from knocking the horizontal pegs (called *bails*) off the vertical supports (called *stumps*). In *bodyline* bowling, the bowler aims at the batsman, rather than the wicket, not so much to hurt him as to frighten him, thus causing him to duck away and so fail to defend his wicket, especially from a ball with **spin** (*English*) on it sufficient to make it swing in or out as it hits the ground in front of the batsman and hit the wicket.

**boffin**, *n.*

**research scientist**

*Slang.* Synonymous with *back-room boy*, referring to a person who during World War II worked as a scientist for the war effort, as, for instance, in the development of radar. Jack Rayner of Muswell Hill, a research scientist in the employ of the General Post Office, is of the opinion that he may be the original *boffin* to whom this bit of R.A.F. World War II slang for 'civilian scientist' was applied. Early in 1943 Mr. Rayner worked with a scientist who liked to give his colleagues nicknames out of Dickens, and the future Mrs. Rayner was his assistant. The name-giver called her Mrs. *Boffin*, after the character in *Our Mutual Friend*. By association Mr. Rayner became Mr. *Boffin*, and was thus addressed by his colleagues on a visit to Fighter and Bomber Command Headquarters soon thereafter.

**bog**, *n.*

*Slang. john (toilet)*

*Slang.* Vulgar slang, used usually in the plural to refer to a communal latrine, as at school or in the service. See **loo**.

**bogey (bogy)**, *n.*

*Slang. cop*

(Hard G.) *Slang.* This old-fashioned word literally means *bugbear*, which should explain its slang use among the criminal element.

**bogie**, *n.*

**truck (non-driving locomotive wheels)**

(Hard G.) Railroad term. *Truck* is a British railroad term meaning 'gondola car' (open freight car). See **bogey**.

**boiled sweets****hard candy**

*Sweets*, as a general term, is the British equivalent of the American general term *candy*. *Boiled sweets* always means the kind of candy that is usually sucked rather than chewed. See, however, **sweet**.

**boiler**. See **chicken**.

**boiler suit****coverall****boiling**, *n.**Slang.* **shooting-match**

*Slang*. The *whole boiling*, referring to a group of people, means the 'whole mob of them' but *boiling* can refer to the *whole lot* of anything.

**bollard**, *n.***traffic post**

A *bollard* in both countries is a post on a ship or dock around which hawsers are tied. An exclusively British meaning is 'traffic post,' i.e., a short post on a traffic island, to regulate traffic by barring passage in certain directions.

**bollick**, *v.t.**Slang.* **bawl out**

*Slang*. It is a curious coincidence that this word resembles *bollocks* (see **ballocks**) and *bollixed* (as in, *all bollixed up*). Those words and phrases have to do with the noun *ball*, usually found in the plural, whereas **bollick** happens to be associated with the verb *bawl*, in its meaning of 'shout' rather than 'weep.'

**bollocks**. See **ballocks**.

**bolshy**, also **bolshie**, *n., adj.**approx.* **unconventional**

*Inf*. Literally *Bolshevik*, but applied by older folk to any unconventional act or person. To *go bolshie* is to go one's own unconventional way, to engage in anti-Establishment behavior; to disregard the accepted form; to do one's own thing. The general sense of the term is 'mutinous' (socially speaking); 'acting in defiance of good form.' Some use it to mean 'obstreperous,' and apply the term to any trouble-maker. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* calls it merely 'uncooperative.'

**bolt-hole**, *n.***hideaway**

*Inf*. A *pied à terre*. Used by exurbanites in *I have a little bolt-hole in Chelsea* and by Londoners in *I have a little bolt-hole in Dorset*. The *Bolt-Hole* is a jocular name given to the Channel Islands, reputed to be a tax haven. All derived from the rabbit's *bolt-hole*.

**bomb**, *n.*1. *Slang.* **smash hit**2. **fortune**

1. *Slang*. A *dazzling success*—the exact opposite of its meaning in America: a *dis-mal flop*! To *go down a bomb* in Britain is to *make a smash hit*. See **knock**.

2. *Slang*. To *make a bomb* is to *make a fortune*. *It costs a bomb* means it costs 'a fortune' or 'an arm and a leg.'

**bonce**, *n.*1. **agate**2. *Slang.* **noodle**

1. *Slang*. A large playing marble.

2. *Slang*. A rare usage, usually in the expression *biff on the bonce*, a shot on the head.

**bone, v.t.***Slang. swipe**Slang.* To steal something; evoking the image of a dog skulking off with a bone.**bone.** See **when it comes to the bone.****bonkers, adj.***Slang. nuts; goofy**Slang.* Also, **certified; doolally; crackers; dotty.****bonnet, n.**

Car hood

Automobile term. See **Appendix II.E.****bonus issue (bonus share)****stock dividend****boob, n., v.t., v.i., Slang****1. goof****2. jail****3. jug**1. Though Americans don't use *boob* as a verb, they commonly use *booboo* to indicate the result.2. To *get boobed* is to *be imprisoned or apprehended.*3. In the plural, a *woman's breasts.***book, v.t.****1. reserve****2. charge**1. In Britain one *books* or *reserves* a table, theater seats, hotel rooms, rental cars, etc. A *booking* in Britain is a *reservation*; a *booking office* and a *booking clerk* (railroad terms) appear in America as *ticket office* and *ticket agent*. *Fully booked* means 'all seats reserved.' 2. When something is *booked to an account* in Britain, the equivalent in America would be *charged*. See also **put down, 2.****book of words****libretto****book seller****bookstore**In Britain, book advertisements generally advise you that the indispensable volume can be obtained at your *book seller* (or *book shop*) rather than at your *bookstore*.**bookstall, n.****newsstand**Synonymous with **newsagent; kiosk.****boot, n.****1. trunk (of an automobile)****2. shoe****3. SEE COMMENT**1. See **Appendix II.E.**2. The British use *boot* to include all leather footwear; but *shoe*, as in America, normally excludes that which comes above the ankle. If a farmhand or a countryman generally wanted to talk about his *rubber boots*, he would refer to his *Wellingtons*, standard country footwear even in dry weather. A British *boot* reaching barely above the ankle would be called a *shoe* in America. An American who would never refer to his *shoes* as his *boots* or to the process of *shining* them as *blacking* them nonetheless usually refers to the person who *shines* his *shoes* as a *bootblack*, although he sometimes calls him a *shoeshine boy*. A *shoe clerk* in America is a *bootmaker's assistant* in Britain even if the *boots* are not *made* in that shop.3. *Boot* is used in a variety of British expressions: See **another pair of shoes (boots); (the) boot is on the other leg (foot); like old boots; put the boot in.**

38 (the) boot is on the other leg (foot)

(the) boot is on the other leg (foot)

the shoe is on the other foot

**boots, n.**

**hotel bootblack**

He formerly was employed to gather shoes put just outside hotel-room doors at night, to be returned, polished, during the night. In military slang, *boots* means a 'rookie officer' in a regiment or other organization.

**boot sale**

SEE COMMENT

An automobile *boot sale* offers for sale all those things one has no further use for. It is called a *boot sale* because you fill the **boot** of your car with articles to dispose of, drive to an appointed place where others are engaging in the same operation, open the boot, strew some of the things around your car, leave some stuff in the boot, and hope to pick up a few pounds while ridding yourself of the stuff you can't stand having around any longer.

**(the) Border, n.**

SEE COMMENT

The one between Scotland and England, which is what is meant when Britons or Scots use the expression *south of the Border*. *North of the Border* is heard as well.

**bore, n.**

**gauge**

In describing the internal diameter of a gun barrel: small *bore*, large *bore*, etc.

**borough, n.**

SEE COMMENT

(Pronounced BURRA (*u* as in *butter*)). Basic unit of local government. See also **rotten borough**.

**borstal, n.**

**reformatory**

*Inf.* Borstal is the name of a town in Kent where Britain's original juvenile prison is located. It used to be called Borstal Prison but is now referred to as Borstal Institution, reflecting the modern trend toward rehabilitation of young offenders. The Borstal System introduced the indeterminate sentence in juvenile cases requiring observation and treatment. Informally, *borstal* (lower case) has come to mean that kind of essentially remedial and educational institution, wherever located. Also called *remand home* or *remand center*.

**boss-eyed**

**squinty**

*Slang.* 'Cockeyed' or *one-eyed*.

**bother, n., interj.**

1. *Slang.* trouble;  
row (dispute)
2. damn! rats!

1. *Inf.* A *spot of bother* in Britain is a *bit of trouble* in America, although serious trouble can also be referred to as a *spot of bother*.

2. *Slang.* Seen in mild exclamations, as in *Bother the boat train!* after learning that the planes are full. Somewhat milder than *blast!*

**bothy, n.**

**hut; one-room cottage**

(Pronounced BOH-thee, rhyming with three.) Used by farm hands.

**bottom, n.**

1. foot (far end)
2. staying power

1. In such phrases as *bottom of the garden*; *bottom of the street*, etc., in the same way that a British street has a *top* rather than a *head*.

2. *Slang*. Occasionally affected, perhaps half-jocularly and certainly self-consciously, in the expression *a lot of bottom*, indicating a good deal of courage and persistence.

**bottom drawer**

**hope chest**

**bottom gear**

**low gear**

Logically enough, **top gear** means *high gear*.

**boundary, n.**

1. SEE COMMENT

2. **limits**

1. A cricket term meaning a hit that sends the ball rolling all the way to the white line around the field that marks the boundary and counts as four runs. The ball doesn't have to land outside the line. If it does that, it scores six runs (see **six**). See also **Appendix II.K**.

2. See **city boundary**; **town boundary**.

**bounder, n.**

**boor**

A person, most often a man, guilty of unacceptable social behavior; an ill-bred person. The term does not necessarily imply low moral character, but it can.

**Bow Bells**

SEE COMMENT

(Pronounced BOH BELLS.) Literally, the *bells of Bow Church*, also called St. Mary-le-Bow Church, in the **City** of London. The church got its name from the bows (arches) of its steeple or from the arches of stone upon which the church was built—those still to be seen in the Norman crypt. The most frequent use of *Bow Bells* is in the expression *within the sound of Bow Bells*, which means 'in the City of London' (see **City**). One is said to be a true cockney if born within the sound of Bow Bells.

See also **cockney**; **East End**. The ecclesiastical court of the Archbishop of Canterbury is held in the crypt of Bow Church, and its head is therefore called the *Dean of the Arches*.

**bowler, n.**

1. **derby (hat)**

2. SEE COMMENT

1. Also called in Britain a *billycock*. Designed in 1850 with felt supplied by a Mr. Bowler for (the story goes) Mr. William Coke, who somehow became Mr. Billy Cock.

2. *Bowler* has an entirely distinct meaning in cricket. The *bowler* (from the verb *bowl*) has approximately the same relationship to cricket as the *pitcher* has to baseball. He *bowls*, over-arm, rather than *itches*, side-arm.

**bowler-hatted, adj.**

**back in civies**

*Slang*. To be *bowler-hatted* is to be retired early from military service with a bonus for retiring. A **bowler**, of course, is a hallmark of civilian attire. See also **demob**.

**bowls, n. pl.**

**lawn bowling**

A *bowl* (in the singular) in sports is a wooden ball not exactly spherical, or eccentrically weighted if spherical, so that it can be made to curve when rolling. Related to *boccie*, *boules*, *pelanca* (or *pétanque*), etc., but the bowling-greens of Britain are as meticulously maintained as the putting greens at the best American golf clubs.

**box, n.****1. intersection area****2. Slang. idiot box**

1. *Box*, or *junction box*, is a British traffic term denoting the grid marked out at a street intersection (**crossroads**). One sees traffic signs reading DO NOT ENTER BOX UNTIL YOUR EXIT IS CLEAR—don't start crossing at an intersection and get stuck in the middle, thus blocking traffic coming at right angles.

2. Short for *goggle-box*, comparable to American *boob tube*.

**Boxing Day**

SEE COMMENT

First weekday after Christmas, December 26, a legal holiday in Britain, unless Christmas falls on a Saturday, in which event December 27 is Boxing Day. This is the day on which Christmas gifts of money are traditionally given to the milkman, **postman** (mailman), **dustman** (garbage man), and others.

**box-room, n.****storage room**

The room in your house for suitcases and trunks. See also **lumber-room**.

**box-spanner.** See **spanner**.**box-up, n.***Inf.* **mix-up**

*Slang.* Like occupying the wrong seats at the theater and being compelled to move. See **balls**.

**boy.** See **head boy**; **old boy**; **pot-boy**; **wide boy**.**braces, n.****suspenders**

The American equivalent, *suspenders*, is used in Britain as the equivalent of American *garters*.

**bracken, n.****large fern**

Also, an area covered with ferns and undergrowth.

**bracket, n.**

SEE COMMENT

American *brackets* are square enclosing marks, thus: [ ]. In Britain, the term is generic for enclosing marks, and includes parentheses, thus: ( ). To differentiate while dictating in Britain, one must specify square brackets or round brackets.

**bradbury, n.** *Inf.**approx.* **a buck**

Sir John Bradbury, who became Secretary of the Treasury in 1914, signed the paper money issued by the Treasury, and his name, often shortened to *brad*, became the colloquial term for the bills themselves, particularly the one-pound note (see **note, 1.**). In 1919 Sir Warren Fisher succeeded Bradbury as the signer of the Treasury notes and the term *bradbury* gave way to *fisher*, until October 1, 1933, after which date all paper money was issued by the Bank of England, and Treasury notes ceased to be legal tender.

**Bradshaw, n.***approx.* **national passenger train timetable**

Short for *Bradshaw's Railway Guide*, originally published by George Bradshaw in 1839. Ceased publication *circa* 1965.

**brakesman, n.****brakeman**

**brake-van, n.**

Railroad term, more commonly called *guard's van*. The American equivalent (*caboose*) was used in Britain to mean 'galley on the deck of a ship,' now obsolete as a ship design feature. *Brake-van* relates to freight trains (**goods** trains), as opposed to *guard's van*, which applies to passenger trains. *Bracke-vans* are cars that enable brakemen to reach and operate a train's brakes.

**caboose****bramble, n., v.i.**

To go *brambling* is to go *blackberry* picking.

**blackberry****branch, n.**

Specialized use in trade union circles: *Branch 101* would be *Local 101* in American union terminology.

**local****brandy-butter, n.**

Butter and brandy creamed together. Served with plum pudding and mince pie. See also **rum-butter**, which it resembles. Also called *Senior Wrangler Sauce*. See **wrangler**.

**hard sauce****brandy snap**

A type of cookie made according to a special recipe containing a good deal of corn (golden) syrup. Flat and thin or rolled with a cream filler. Delicious and fattening.

SEE COMMENT

**brash, n.**

Or *dry twigs*, or both. A rustic term.

**hedge clippings****brass, n.**

*Slang*. The more common British slang terms are **lolly** and **dibs**.

*Slang*. **dough (money)****brassed off**

*Slang*. Synonymous with **cheesed off** and *fed up*.

*Slang*. **teed off****brass plate, n.**

To *put up your brass plate* in Britain is to *hang out your shingle* and the like in America.

**shingle****brawn, n.****head cheese****brazing lamp**

Synonymous with **blowlamp**.

**blowtorch****bread bin**

Or bread basket, in American slang, one's stomach.

**bread box****bread roll**

That which encloses a hamburger (**wimpy**) in Britain. See also **bap**.

**bun****break, n.**

School term. *Break* is used in both countries to mean a 'temporary suspension of activities' generally, for example, to use the bathroom. *Recess* usually refers to Parliament in Britain, and the term is not used to refer to the daily pause at school.

**recess**

break a journey at ...

stop off at...

breakdown gang

wrecking crew

breakdown van or lorry

tow truck

breaktime. See playtime.

breast-pin, *n.*

stick-pin

Worn in necktie.

breve, *n.*

double whole note

See Appendix II.F.

brew up

1. make tea

2. burn

1. *Inf.* Also a noun, *brew-up*, for which there is no equivalent American expression, since the institution of tea and tea-making in general is not a vital function of daily life. A *brew-up* is any making of tea, whether in a priceless China pot or a billycan, at any time of day or night. See also **be mum**.

2. This meaning was originally applied to an army tank that had been hit by enemy fire, but has also been used to describe an auto accident that has caused a fire.

brickie or bricky, *n.*, *Slang*.

bricklayer

brick wall

*Inf.* stone wall*Inf.* Any impenetrable barrier.bridewell, *n.*

jail

An archaic term, from *St. Bride's Well*, in London, where there stood an early prison.

bridge coat

*approx.* velvet jacket

An old-fashioned garment no longer in common use. A long-sleeved velvet jacket, usually black, worn formerly by women for bridge in the evening. Perhaps the feminine equivalent of another vanishing garment—the *smoking jacket* (also of velvet, most often maroon).

brief, *n.*

instructions to trial lawyer

In America a *brief* is a written outline submitted to the court in the course of litigation. In Britain it is the **solicitor's** instructions to the **barrister**. A *briefless barrister* is an *unemployed* one. See also **solicitor**; **barrister**. A *dock brief* is one that bypasses the solicitor, consisting as it does of instructions given at the trial by the accused in a criminal case directly to the barrister who is going to defend him, without benefit of solicitor. For the origin of this term, see **dock**, 2.

brigadier, *n.*

brigadier general

British military rank between colonel and major general.

**bright**, *adj.*

1. well

2. pleasant

1. *Inf.* When asked how he feels, a Briton might say, *I'm not too bright*, where an American would use the expressions *not too well*, or *not up to snuff*.

2. *Inf.* When a Briton says, *It's not very bright, is it?* looking up at the sky, he means that the weather isn't very *pleasant*. See also **bright periods**.

**Brighton**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

A seaside resort in the Southeast, the archetypical equivalent of Atlantic City of an earlier time. Imposing Edwardian hotels and fascinating lanes (known as *The Lanes*) lined with antique shops full of every description of furniture and a bric-a-brac, much of it quite good, characterize Brighton at its best.

**bright periods**

**fair with occasional showers**

Synonymous with **sunny intervals**. A more accurate translation might be *rain with brief intermissions*. See also **bright**.

**brill**. See **Appendix II.H**.

**brill**, *adj.*

*Inf.* **terrific**

*Slang.* *Brills!* is used as an interjection meaning 'Great!' Said to be a shortening of *brilliant*.

**bring off a touch**, *Slang.*

*Slang.* **make a touch**

Succeed in borrowing desired funds.

**Bristol fashion**

**everything's A-OK**

*Inf.* Usually, *all shipshape and Bristol fashion*. The port of Bristol was traditionally efficient in years gone by. Nautical slang, taken into informal general usage, and still heard.

**Bristols**, *n. pl.*

*Slang.* **tits**

*Slang.* From London rhyming slang, formerly *Bristol city*, to rhyme with *titty*. There is only one Bristol City, but titties come in pairs, so the rhymesters pluralized City, then dropped it in the way they normally eliminated the rhyming word, and then proceeded to pluralize Bristol. Another word for this part of the anatomy is **charlies**, also spelled *charleys*, of uncertain etymology.

**broad**, *n.*

**dame**

An offensive American term picked up in England, meaning *prostitute*.

**broad arrow**

SEE COMMENT

Symbol marking government property, formerly including convicts' uniforms.

**broad bean**

*approx.* lima bean

Similar, but larger, darker and with a coarser skin. The British variety is the seed of a vetch known as *Vicia faba*; the American, that of the plant known as *Phaseolus limensis*.

**broadcloth**, *n.*

**black woolen cloth**

In America, *broadcloth* is the equivalent of what the British and Americans term *poplin*. British *broadcloth* is the kind of suiting material used for one's Sunday best.

**broadsheet, n.****1. handbill****2. large-sized newspaper**

1. Also called *throwaway* in America and, picturesquely, *broadside*. *Handbill* used to be the common term, but the British more often now use *leaflet*.

2. The size of *The New York Times*, as opposed to a tabloid.

**Brock's benefit****fireworks display**

*Inf.* Named for a noted manufacturer of fireworks. By extension, any great excitement, air raid, Guy Fawkes Night (see **guy**), etc.

**broken ranges****broken sizes**

Odd sizes, offered in a sale.

**broking firm****brokerage firm****broolly, n.***Inf.* **bumbershoot**

*Inf.* The English term for umbrella is used quite seriously; the American word is humorous. See **gamp**.

**brothel-creepers, n. pl., Slang.****crepe-soled shoes****brown, n.****1. SEE COMMENT****2. covey of game birds**

1. *Slang.* A copper penny.

2. *Inf.* The *brown* means a *flying covey of game birds*, and *firing into the brown* means, literally, 'aiming at the covey instead of choosing a particular bird,' and by extension, firing into any crowd of people.

**brown bread****whole wheat bread**

Hovis (pronounced HOE-viss), a proprietary brand of flour and bread, is ubiquitous in Britain. Its name is often used generically for any brown bread.

**Brum, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Slang.* Short for *Brummagem*, an old slang name for *Birmingham*, said to approximate the local pronunciation of that name, but the *g* is pronounced soft. *Brummagem* came to be used as an adjective meaning 'shoddy,' a sense derived from the counterfeiting of coins there in the 17th century. A *Brummie* is a native of that city.

**brush up***Inf.* **brush up on**

*Inf.* The British *brush up* their knowledge of a subject, while the Americans *brush up on* it.

**B.S.T.**

SEE COMMENT

British Standard Time, now obsolete. It was a system of all-year-round daylight saving time (called **summer time** in Britain), tried for a year or two in order to line up with European Standard Time, but abandoned in 1971.

**Bt. See Baronet.****bubble and squeak**

SEE COMMENT

Leftover greens and potatoes—sometimes with meat—mixed together and fried; name derived from the sounds they make while cooking in the pan.

**bubbly, n.****champagne***Slang.* Synonymous with **champers**; both terms old-fashioned or humorous.**buck, n.****eel trap**

A basket used to trap eels.

**bucket down****rain cats and dogs***Inf.* Synonymous with **rain stair-rods**. (A stair-rod is used to secure carpeting to staircase steps.)**Buck House**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Buckingham Palace; an antique jocular expression, but still seen.**buckshee, adj., adv.***Inf. for free (gratis)**Slang.* A corruption of *baksheesh*, used in the Near East to mean 'alms' or 'tip.' Also used in expressions like a *buckshee day*, describing a day unexpectedly free as a result of the cancellation of scheduled events or appointments.**buck up****improve; check up***Inf.* Examples: *The railways had better buck up their ideas of service! Her idea of encouraging me was to say, "Buck up!"***budget, n.**

SEE COMMENT

The annual statement of projected national income and expenditures, made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer (counterpart of the Secretary of the Treasury) in the House of Commons. A *mini-budget* is an interim partial statement of the same sort. But in the popular mind, *budget* means 'tax bill,' because the new tax proposals included in the *budget* are the part that most immediately affects all of us.**budgie, n.****small parakeet***Inf.* The common household abbreviation for *budgerigar*, a miniature Australian parrot with a long tapered tail, bred in greens, blues, and yellows.**buffer, n.****1. bumper****2. Slang. foggy**1. Railroad term; but an American automobile *bumper* is a *fender* in Britain.2. *Slang.* A silly person. Usually preceded by *old*.**buffet, n.****snack bar**Both countries use *buffet* to mean 'sideboard' or 'cupboard,' and the terms *buffet supper* and *buffet dinner* to describe meals where the guests serve themselves from a buffet. In all these senses Americans approximate the French pronunciation: BOO'-FAY'. When it denotes a piece of furniture, the British sometimes pronounce it BUFF'-IT. It is the common British name for a *lunch counter* or *snack bar* at a railroad station, and in that case the British use a quasi-Frenchified pronunciation, educated people saying BOO'-FAY, the others BUFFY.**bug, n.****bedbug**Generic in America for 'insect' or 'infection' which is the generic British term. Don't use *bug* unless you mean 'bedbug,' except in the context of the microorganisms which cause flu and related epidemics: *He couldn't come; he's got the bug* or, *I must have caught a bug: I feel awful!*

**bugger, v.t.***Slang. foul up*

*Slang.* But as an expletive *bugger* has many different American equivalents: *I'll be buggered!* means: 'I'll be damned!' *Bugger you!* means 'Go to the devil!' *Bugger off!* means anything from 'Get the hell out of here!' to 'Fuck off!' depending on the circumstances. To *bugger off* is to *get the hell out of* somewhere, to *leave* in more or less of a hurry. Be aware, however, that *buggery* is a word meaning *sodomy*, and *bugger* means *commit sodomy with*. See also **bugger all**.

**bugger all***Slang. nothing*

*Slang.* A coarse intensification of **damn all**, not to be confused with exotic acts of intercourse.

**Buggin's (Buggins') turn**

SEE COMMENT

Promotion based on seniority (sometimes rotation) rather than merit. *Buggins* is an arbitrary name.

**builder's merchant****building supply firm****building society****savings and loan association****building surveyor.** See **surveyor**.**buller, n.****monitor**

*Slang.* *Buller* is short for *bulldog*, which is slang for **proctor's** assistant. A proctor at Oxford or Cambridge is attended by two *bulldogs*, or *bullers*, who do the dirty work of disciplining.

**bully beef.** See **salt beef**.**bullock.** See **jolly**.**bum, n.***Slang. buttocks; can*

*Slang.* For obvious reasons, *Hallelujah I'm a Bum* would be modified to *Hallelujah I'm a Tramp* for Britain. See **arse**.

**bumble, n.****pompous bureaucrat**

*Inf.* Literally, a *bumble* is a mace-bearing ceremonial official at British universities or churches (also known as a *beadle*), who gets all decked out but really serves little purpose. Figuratively, he has given his name to any minor official puffed up with his own importance. The British use the word pejoratively, as Americans often use *bureaucrat*, to describe pompous officials (often lowly clerks) in love with red tape who delight in obstructing the expedition of what should be simple procedures.

**bumf (bumph), n.**

1. toilet paper
2. worthless paper
3. rubbish

*Slang.* An abbreviation of *bum-fodder* (see **bum**), this slang term for *toilet paper* has, apparently in ignorance of its inelegant origin, been extended as a pejorative for *dull paper work*, *dreary documents*, *worthless paper* of the kind generally associated with red tape and bureaucratic memoranda, and more recently, to mean 'rubbish,' in a phrase like *Look here, this may be a lot of bumf, but my theory is. . .*

**bum-freezer, n.***Slang.* **ass-freezer***Slang.* Especially a short jacket worn by schoolboys or tarts.**bummaree, n.**

SEE COMMENT

(Accent on the last syllable.) Dealer or porter at Billingsgate or other licensed market. See **billingsgate**.**bumping-race.** See **May Week**.**bump-start, v.t.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* To start a car by getting it to roll and suddenly throwing it into gear.**bump-supper.** See **May Week**.**bun, n., Inf.****squirrel****bunce, n.***Inf.* **windfall***Inf.* Originally, just any *money* or *profit* but later an unexpected profit, a *windfall*. It has now gained some currency as a verb, especially in the gerund, *buncing*, to describe the practice, in retail stores, of sticking new higher-price tags over the original lower-price labels on articles for sale.**bunches, n. pl.****clearance items**

In periodic sales at clothing shops.

**bun fight, n.***approx.* very large tea party*Inf.* Sometimes *bun feast*. There is no equivalent jocular American colloquialism. Can also apply to a cocktail party or similar get-together.**bungalow, n.****one-story house**An American *bungalow* is the equivalent of a British *cottage*. Both modest structures.**bung-ho!, interj.**1. *Inf.* **so long!**2. *Inf.* **cheers!**1. *Inf.* Synonymous with **cheerio!**2. *Inf.* Synonymous with such words as *Santé, Salute, Skol, Prosit*, etc.**bunk, n., v.i.***Slang.* **take it on the lam; light out***Slang.* Alone, as a verb; or as a noun in *do a bunk*.**bunker, v.i.****refuel****bunkered, adj.***Inf.* **messed up***Slang.* In Britain one gets *bunkered* in troublesome situations in which Americans would describe themselves as *messed up* in the sense of 'entangled'.**bureau, n.****secretary**A writing desk with drawers. An American *bureau* is the equivalent of a British **chest of drawers**.

**burke**, also **burk**, v.t.**murder; suppress**

*Slang.* An honest man will not *burke* a fact merely to support a thesis. Sometimes spelled *burk*, though derived from the name of a Scottish murderer, W. Burke (hanged in 1829), who smothered people to sell their bodies for dissection. The original slang meaning was to 'kill without leaving marks of violence.' *To burke a question* is to suppress it as soon as it rears its head.

**burn one's boats**, *Inf.**Inf.* **burn one's bridges****bursar**, *n.***treasurer; scholarship student**

A *bursar* is a *college treasurer* in Britain, as well as in America. It has an additional meaning in Britain, 'scholarship student,' which is synonymous with another British word unfamiliar to Americans, *exhibitioner*.

**busby**, *n.***tall fur hat**

Worn by Royal Horse Artillery and Hussars. See also **bearskin**; **Guards**.

**busies**, *n. pl.**Slang.* **dicks**

*Slang.* As everyone knows who enjoys reading detective stories.

**busker**, *n.***street entertainer**

From an old word, *busk*, meaning 'improvise.'

**butcher**, *n.**Inf.* **brutal killer**

*Inf.* Any person who kills wantonly, even for pay, can be called a *butcher* in America as well as Britain.

**butchery**, *n.***meat department**

*Butchery* would not generally be applied to a butcher shop (*butcher's shop*, in Britain), but rather to a *meat department*. American dictionary definitions include the meaning 'butcher business,' but the use of the term *butchery* is normally restricted to signify carnage.

**Butlin's**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* William Butlin established a type of family holiday camp with everything **laid on**: separate **chalet**-bungalows around a central community building where those who wished to mingle participated in fun and games (movies, dancing, cards, etc.) under the somewhat authoritarian direction of the director of social activities, while nurses took care of the children, leaving the parents free for their revelry. The camps have proliferated, and, at moderate prices, are a boon to middle class families of modest means.

**battered eggs****scrambled eggs**

The American term has gained precedence, but the British method of whipping eggs in a buttered saucepan is superior.

**butter-muslin**, *n.***cheesecloth**

Also called *muslin*. The references to different dairy products indicate that the material in question originated in both countries in dairy farm use. However, in each country the name is used without any conscious reference to happy days at the farm. What the Americans call *muslin* would be called *calico* in Britain; but *calico* in America means what the British would call a *cheap cotton print*.

**buttery, n.**

Where wines and food are kept. A special British use: room in a **college**, especially at Oxford and Cambridge, for sale of food and drink to students.

**larder****buttons, n., Inf.**See also **page**.**bellhop****butty, n.**

*Inf.* Pal, friend, chum, especially fellow-soldier. The British consider the usual American term *buddy* a variant of *butty*, and a corruption of *brother*. The Americans consider *buddy* a development from baby talk for *brother*.

*Inf.* **buddy****buzz off, v.i.**

*Slang.* Synonymous with **cheese off; cut away; get stuffed; push off**.

*Slang.* **scram****by all means**

*Inf.* Means 'there is no objection whatever.' The British would not ordinarily use it in the American hortatory sense, as in *By all means visit the Prado*.

*Inf.* **perfectly okay****By Appointment**

SEE COMMENT

One may see on merchandise labels, shop signs or commercial stationery: *By Appointment to* . . . naming some royal personage—the monarch, the Queen Mother, a duke. This means that the purveyor has received a warrant of supplying that personage with the commodity or service in question. In the public toilets of the British Museum, for example, each sheet of toilet paper was stamped in recent years with the legend '*By Appointment to her Majesty*.'

**by-blow, n.**

A particularly uncharming word.

**bastard****(obtaining money) by deception****(obtaining money) under false pretenses**

The American usage is also heard in Britain, with *by* rather than *under*.

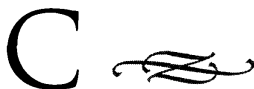
**by-election, also bye-election, n.**Of a **Member**, to fill a vacancy in the House of Commons.**special election****by-law, also bye-law n.**

Used in municipal government. *By-laws* in America usually mean 'corporate by-laws,' i.e., the procedural rules and regulations governing a corporation.

**ordinance****by the way, pred. adj.**

*By the way* is used in both countries adverbially as the equivalent of *incidentally*. Its use as a predicate adjectival phrase is fairly common in Britain, rare in America.

**incidental**



**cabbage-looking**, *adj.*

*Inf.* **stupid**

*Slang.* *I'm not so green as I'm cabbage-looking, i.e., 'I'm not as dumb as I look.'*

**caboose**, *n.*

**galley**

In America, the last car on a freight train, used by the train crew. In Britain a kitchen on the deck of a ship.

**cab-rank**, *n.*

**taxi stand**

**cack-handed**, *adj.*

**clumsy**

*Inf.* Literally, *left-handed*.

**Caesar**, *n.*

**Caesarean**

*Inf.* In both countries *operation* or *section* is understood; but the British sometimes use the name of the great Roman while the Americans always use the adjective derived from his name. In either case, a baby is delivered by cutting a section of the mother's abdomen.

**café**

**coffee shop**

Many Britons deliberately mispronounce *café* as KAIF or KAFF.

**cakehole**, *n.*

*Slang.* **trap**

*Slang.* Mouth. "*Put that in your cakehole.*"

**calendar**, *n.*

**catalogue**

In the sense of a 'list of courses' offered by a university, together with appropriate regulations and descriptions of the courses, terms, and examination dates.

**calendar, station.** See **station calendar**.

**calico**, *n.*

**white cotton cloth; muslin**

*Calico* as used in America would be called a *cheap cotton print* in Britain. See also **butter muslin**.

**call**, *n., v.t., v.i.*

**1. vi., visit**

**2. n., vt., v.i., bid**

1. Mr. Jones *called*, in America, means that Mr. Jones 'telephoned.' In Britain, it means that Mr. Jones 'dropped in,' 'came by.' Britons say *rang up* in the case of a telephone call.

2. Bridge term: *Let's see, you called two hearts, didn't you? A call is a 'bid.'*

**call after**

**name for**

The British *call* their babies *after* favored relatives and national heroes. Americans may name a child *for* someone or merely *call* a boy *Thomas* or the like.

**call at**

Both countries speak of vessels as *calling at* ports. The British occasionally apply the same term to trains. Thus one sees signs in the Charing Cross Railway Station at the gate (**barrier**) describing a particular train as *Not calling at London Bridge*.

**stop at****call-box, n.**

Also called *kiosk* or *telephone box*.

**telephone booth****called to the bar**

This British phrase applies only to **barristers** and refers to persons who have received a license to practice as barristers. See also **Inns of Court**; **barrister**.

**admitted to the bar****caller, n.**

A person making a telephone call is referred to as *caller* and is addressed by the operator as *caller*. In America the *caller* would be referred to as the *calling party* and would be addressed by the operator as *sir* or *madam*. See also **pay for the call**; **personal call**.

**calling party****call 999**

Young British children know they must dial or punch this number to get immediate attention from emergency services. If anything, 999 is easier to ring up than 911, but we can be sure no one will declare 911 obsolete.

**call 911****call-out charge**

What the repair man charges when he visits your home because something's gone wrong.

**house call charge****call to order**

When a person violates the rules of parliamentary procedure or otherwise offends decorum at any meeting, the presiding officer *calls him to order*. In America it is the meeting that is *called to order*.

**rebuke****call-up, n.**

Military service term. A *call-up* card is a *draft* card.

**draft****Calor gas**

Proprietary name, but used generically for liquefied butane gas in pressurized containers in homes, on boats, etc.

**propane gas****camber, n.**

A British road sign proclaiming REVERSE CAMBER means 'road banked wrong way.'

**bank****camiknickers, n. pl**

All-in-one ladies' undergarment with camisole and **knickers**.

## SEE COMMENT

**camp bed**

The British also use the word *cot*, but to them it means what the Americans call a *crib*. Also, *safari bed*, once proprietary.

**folding cot****candidature, n.****candidacy**

**candlestick telephone**

The old-fashioned kind.

**upright telephone****candy-floss, n.****1. cotton candy****2. SEE COMMENT**

2. Used metaphorically for 'vapid thoughts.'

**cane, n., v.t.****whip; switch**

What Americans call a *cane*, the British prefer to call a *walking-stick*.

**cannon, n.****carom**

Term in billiards.

**Cantabrigian, n., adj.****SEE COMMENT**

Of Cambridge, from *Cantabrigia*, the Latin name for Cambridge. In a narrower sense, a Cantabrigian is a student or graduate of Cambridge University. Informally abbreviated to *Cantab.*, which is the usual form, and applies in America to Cambridge, Mass., and particularly Harvard.

**canteen of cutlery, n.****silver set**

Contained in a case, usually a fitted one.

**canterbury, n.****magazine rack**

Properly speaking, this word means a 'low stand with light partitions, built to hold music portfolios.' This original meaning is borne out by the fact that the genuine old ones are usually decorated with woodwork carved in the form of a lyre. People use them, lyre or no lyre, most often to hold magazines, newspapers, and the like.

**Cantuarian, n. adj.****SEE COMMENT**

This is the name of the official magazine of The King's School, Canterbury, a **public school** reputed to be the oldest functioning school in the world. The name is derived from *Cantuaria*, the medieval Latin name for Canterbury, which in Roman times bore the name of *Durovernum*. Neither a King's School **old boy**, nor a member of the **staff** (*faculty*), nor a resident of Canterbury would be called a *Cantuarian*, in the way in which *Cantabrigian*, *Oxonian*, etc. are used with reference to Cambridge, Oxford, and other university cities. However, this rule does apply to Archbishops of Canterbury, who sign by given name followed by *Cantuar.*: *Cantuar* is an abbreviation of *Cantuariensis*, the Latin adjective formed from *Cantuaria*.

**cap, n.****1. letter (in athletics)****2. diaphragm**

1. Sports term, usually in the expression *win one's cap*. It generally indicates that one has played for one's county or one's country. To *be capped* is to *have won one's cap*; *uncapped*, generally, refers to players who have yet to win their *caps*; but an uncapped county player is one who has not yet been selected to play for England in a **Test Match**.

2. *Slang*. For contraceptive use.

**(to) cap it all****(to) make matters worse**

In other words, to complete the tale of woe.

- capsicum, n.** green pepper
- caravan, n.** house trailer  
As an automobile term. It is also used in the more original romantic sense. A *caravan park* is a *trailer court*.
- car breaker** car wrecker
- cardan shaft** drive shaft  
Automobile term. See **Appendix II.E**.
- cardigan.** See under **Balaclava**.
- cards.** See **give (someone) his cards**.
- care a pin** Slang. **give a hoot**  
Slang. Almost always used, like its American equivalent, in the negative.
- caretaker, n.** janitor  
*Caretaker*, in America, implies the owner's absence. *Gardener* would be the term used by a Briton owning country property.
- (in) Carey Street** Slang. **flat broke**  
Inf. The High Court of Justice in Bankruptcy (commonly known as the Bankruptcy Court) used to be located on Carey Street in London. (It is now located around the corner at Victory House, Kingsway.) That is the origin of the peculiar phrase *to be in Carey Street*, which is usually used to describe the condition of being flat broke rather than in technical bankruptcy.
- cargo boat** freighter
- Carnaby Street** SEE COMMENT  
A street in the Soho section of London, studded with apparel shops catering to the young. In the 60s the name was used allusively to refer to youthful used clothing; sometimes shortened to *Carnaby*, as in *Carnaby styling or attire*. Its heyday as the center of youthful fashion has gone, and it is now becoming identified with tourist attractions.
- carousel, n.** rotating conveyor belt  
Like those conveying suitcases at airports. Spelled with one *r* in Britain, where it does not mean 'merry-go-round' as in America.
- car park** parking lot
- carpet, n.** SEE COMMENT  
British purists distinguish between *carpet* and *rug* on the basis of size: forty sq. ft. or over is a *carpet*; under that size is a *rug*. The American distinction is based on type of manufacture: a *carpet* is machine made; a *rug* handmade. Incidentally, indolent Americans usually sweep things *under the rug*.
- carpet area** floor space
- carriage, n.** 1. car; coach

## 2. freight

1. In Britain a railroad *car* or *coach* is called a *carriage*; *car* means 'automobile' and *coach* also means 'bus'.

2. *Carriage* means 'freight' in the sense of *cost of shipping*. *Carriage forward* means 'freight extra'; *carriage paid* means 'freight prepaid.' See also **forward; freight**.

**carriage rug****lap robe**

Has given way to *travelling rug*. All terms have given way to effective car heaters.

**carrier-bag, n.****shopping bag**

In all but the grandest shops, one pays an extra small amount for the bag that carries one's purchases. The alternative free brown paper bag, if available at all, is so flimsy as to be useless. While the hyphen is beginning to disappear from many Briticisms such as this one, the meaning of *carrier-bag* remains constant, even though *shopping bag* also is heard frequently.

**carry-cot, n.****portable bassinet****carry on, v.i., n.**

## 1. v.i., keep going

## 2. v.i., flirt

## 3. v.i., n., fuss

## 4. military command, as you were

1. In road directions, *carry on* means 'keep going straight ahead.' It is the equivalent of *You first* when one is offering to hold a door or otherwise step aside for someone. At times it seems to mean little more than 'O.K.' and once in a while it replaces *so long*.

2. An old-fashioned way to conduct an amorous affair.

3. A slang noun meaning 'fuss': *This has been a most trying carry-on* (situation, affair).

**carry one's bat****Inf. stick it out**

*Inf.* To *carry*, *carry out*, or *bring out one's bat* is to 'outlast the others,' *to stick it out* and finally *put it over* or *bring it off*. Stems from cricket as it used to be played: the batsman who was not put out left at the end of his *innings* carrying his bat out with him instead of leaving it for the next batsman.

**carry the can****Slang. be the fall guy**

*Slang.* The phrase is often lengthened to *carry the can back*. The *can* in question is said to be the one containing dynamite used in blasting operations. See also **hold the baby**.

**cartridge, n.****shell**

Shotgun ammunition. Used in both countries as well to mean the ammunition used in a rifle or revolver.

**carve up****swindle**

*Slang.* Especially, to cut a partner-in-crime out of his share of the loot. The noun *carve-up* has acquired the more general meaning of any swindle. It has been used in a quite different sense to mean a 'melon' in the sense of 'bonanza,' which may be the result of the legitimate splitting of a windfall, but somehow the impression lingers that the windfall may not have been all that legitimate.

**case, n.**

For example, a British shop advertises a *case* of dessert spoons where an American store would speak of a *set* or a *box*.

**box****cashier, n.**

Banking term, used interchangeably with *teller* in Britain. In most American banks, the title *cashier* is reserved for the officer who is the equivalent of the *secretary* in non-banking corporations.

**teller****cash point**

SEE COMMENT

Sign occasionally seen in supermarkets and other shops, indicating the place where one pays. The equivalent American sign would be CASHIER OR PAY HERE.

**casket, n.**

A *casket* in America means a 'coffin.' It never has this meaning in Britain.

**small box****cast, v.t.**

Special military term applied to superannuated cavalry horses. Unhappily they are usually slaughtered for horsemeat at a **knacker's** yard rather than sent to pasture.

**discard****castor sugar, n.**

*Castor sugar* is more finely grained than American *granulated sugar* but not powdery like American powdered or confectioner's sugar, which is called *icing sugar* in Britain.

**finely granulated sugar****casual labourer**

This term refers principally to workers like stevedores who show up for work but may or may not get any work that day. *Casual labourer* does not apply exclusively to heavy labor: a young nurse who has lost a series of steady jobs because of facilities closing down and became a free-lancer may speak of herself as a *casual labourer*, as does a teacher who was retired at 60 and became a paid tutor. See also **casual ward**.

**temp or occasional worker****casualty ward**

In a hospital. The person in charge may be a *charge-nurse*. The term is often shortened to *casualty*, just as the American equivalent becomes *emergency* ("Dr. Kildare wanted in *emergency*!")

**emergency room****casual ward**

A place for temporary housing of the homeless. Synonymous with **doss-house**; derived from the extension of **casual labourer** to mean 'pauper' or 'vagrant.'

**flop house****cat, n.**

*Inf.* Undoubtedly a reference to *cat-o'-nine-tails*; rarer as a practice than a word, but there are still those who advocate "bring back the *cat*," i.e., 'reintroduce corporal punishment.' Incidentally, in the expression *room enough to swing a cat*, the *cat* is not a screaming feline, but a *cat-o'-nine-tails*, a nine-knotted rope used for flogging offenders.

**whipping**

**cat among the pigeons***Inf.* **match in a tinderbox***Inf.* To put the cat among the pigeons is to start a fuss by introducing a highly inflammatory topic into a conversation.**catapult, n. v.i.****slingshot**

The British use this word as the Americans do, as both noun and verb.

**cat burglar, Inf.***Inf.* **second-story man****catch hold of the wrong end of the stick***Inf.* **miss the point***Inf.* Sometimes get instead of catch.**catch out, v.t.****catch (in a mistake); detect**A Briton will catch you out if you commit an error. He will also catch out the error. The Americans usually omit the out. See **Appendix I.A.1**.**catch (someone) up, v.t.****catch up with (someone)**

The British catch you up or catch up with you.

**caterer, n.****food supplier**

The term caterer is broad in Britain, including the more restricted American sense, and would normally be understood as 'restaurateur.' In America, the term catering is confined to the preparation and bringing of food to a home or other establishment and serving it there for a special occasion.

**cat-lap, n.***Slang.* **soda water***Slang.* Dull people, novels, or movies would never be likened to cat-lap: the term is reserved for weak tea and similar outrages on the deserving public.**catmint, n.****catnip****cat's-eyes, n. pl.****road reflectors**

Reflector studs, set at close intervals into road surfaces along the white lines marking the lanes. Enormously helpful on unlighted roads and foggy nights, they are mounted in depressible rubber frames so that they can be driven over without harm.

**cat's-meat, n.****cat food****cattery, n.****cat-boarding kennel**

Also cat-breeding establishment. Cattery is heard in America.

**cattleman, n.****cowhand**

A cattleman in America is a rancher or cattle owner. In Britain he works for somebody else.

**caucus, n.****political party committee**A political organization that formulates party policy, election strategy, and the like. In Britain, the word is somewhat derogatory, implying the smoke-filled atmosphere of a powerful unofficial cabal. A caucus in America is an *ad hoc* political meeting of party regulars.

**caught on the hop**, *Slang*.

*Inf.* **caught napping**

**caught on the wrong foot**

*Inf.* **caught napping**

*Slang*. A term borrowed from **cricket**. A **batsman** (*batter*) put in this position by the **bowler** (*approx.* pitcher) is in difficulties.

**cause-list**, *n.*

**trial calendar**

Legal term.

**cave!**, *interj.*

*Slang.* **cheezit!**

*Schoolboy slang*. (Pronounced CAVEY.) This is the singular imperative of the Latin verb *caveo*. This imperative form may be familiar from reproductions of the well-preserved Pompeian floor mosaic showing the picture of a dog and bearing the legend *Cave canem* (beware of the dog). To *keep cave* is to *keep watch*, *act as lookout*.

**ceased to exist**

**been disconnected**

Gloomy intelligence imparted by the telephone operator: *Sorry sir, that line has ceased to exist*. A *ceaseline* is a *disconnected number*.

**centenary**, *n.*

**centennial**

Both terms are used in both countries. Both pronounce *centennial* the same way; but *centenary* is usually accented on the first syllable and has a short *e* in the second syllable in America, whereas in Britain it is usually accented on the second syllable, with a long *e*, though it is permissible there to shorten the *e*, or even to accent the first syllable.

**centillion**. See **Appendix II.D**.

**central reserve**. See **centre strip**.

**centreplate**. See **sliding keel**.

**centre strip**

**median divider**

Called *central reserve* in the official Highway Code, an appellation as pompous as *median divider*. See also **dual carriageway**.

**century**, *n.*

**100 runs**

In a cricket match, the **batsman** who makes 100 runs is said to score a *century*. See **batsman**.

**certified**, *adj.*

**insane**

*Inf.* A past participle used as an adjective, both literally and hyperbolically, like its American equivalent. *Certified* is now heard in both countries. See synonyms under **bonkers**.

**C.H.** See **Birthday Honours**.

**chair**, *n.*

**track socket**

Metal socket holding railroad track in place on a tie.

**chairman (of a company), n.**

The Americans do not speak of the *chairman* of a company or corporation. They speak of the *chairman of the board*, meaning the 'chairman of the board of directors.' Such a *chairman* is not, strictly speaking, a corporate officer. He runs meetings of the board of directors but has only one vote on the board, and often the term implies more honor than power. Thus, an American corporate *president* or *chief executive officer* (CEO) is often said to have been kicked upstairs when he becomes chairman of the board. In a British company, the *chairman* is the equivalent of the *president* of an American corporation. See also **managing director**.

**president (of a corporation)****chalet, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A small suburban house, far removed from the Swiss mountain cottage from which the name was stolen.

**chalk and cheese****night and day**

*Worlds apart.* As *different as chalk from cheese* is the usual phrase, the equivalent of *as different as night and day*. This is sometimes shortened to *chalk and cheese*: *Why, they're simply chalk and cheese.*

**chambermaid, n.****hotel maid**

Not a household servant as in America. See also **char**; **daily woman**.

**chambers, n. pl.****lawyer's office**

The **solicitor** will invite you to his or her *office*; a **barrister** more often to *chambers*. An American lawyer would never speak of *chambers*, but that term is applied to a judge's private office (usually adjoining the courtroom). See also **Inns of Court**.

**champers, n.****champagne**

*Slang.* Americans may be more familiar with the other British slang for this patriotic beverage: **bubbly**. As in *champagne*, the CH- is pronounced SH-. See **Harry** . . .

**champion, adj.****fine**

*Slang.* *Champion* is used adjectivally in America in sports terminology as, for instance, *champion boxer*, *champion golfer*. In Britain it is occasionally used as the equivalent of *fine* or *great*. Thus: *Alf is a champion lad!*

**chance, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A cricket player who misses a catch off a **batsman's** bat, or a **football** (soccer) player who misses a possible goal, is said to have had a *chance*. See **misfield**.

**chance-child, n.****Inf. love child**

*Inf.* The British term seems harsh beside the romantic American term. Both countries use the unfeeling term *illegitimate child*. The British sometimes use the term *come-by-chance* to mean the same thing.

**chance-come, adj.****fortuitous**

Describing anything that happens by chance.

**chancellor, n.****honorary university head**

University term. See also **vice-chancellor**.

Chancellor of the Exchequer

Secretary of the Treasury

chance-met, *adj.*

met by chance

chance one's arm, *Inf.**Inf.* try one's luckchange. See **get much change out of.**

change down

down shift

*Inf.* An automobile term. The British also use the term *change up*, where the Americans would say *shift*, a term which in America is always understood to refer to shifting up, i.e., shifting into higher gear. See **Appendix II.E.**

change the bowling. See **open the bowling.**changing-room, *n.*

1. dressing-room

2. locker-room

1. In a clothing store.

2. In a gym or at a stadium, swimming pool, tennis court, and the like.

chap, *n.**Inf.* guy; fellow

The use of the word *chap* by Britons seems affected to most Americans. Its commonest equivalent in America is *guy*, which is colloquial. Americans also use *fellow*, which is less inelegant than *guy* (as opposed to *person*, for instance), but still seems to come off as somewhat deprecatory. *Guy* is common in Britain now.

chapel, *adj.*

non-Anglican

Used to describe a person adhering to a Protestant sect other than the established church, i.e., the Church of England (also known as the Anglican Church). It is a shortening of *chapelfolk* or *chapelgoer*, both of which are informal labels for members of such sects. The standard British nouns for such a person are **dissenter** and **nonconformist**, which are interchangeable and sometimes capitalized. *Free Church* is another synonym.

chap-fallen, *adj.*

dejected

*Chap* is an archaic variant of *chop*, meaning 'jaw' (as in, e.g., *lick one's chops*). *Chap-fallen* describes a person whose jaws are hanging, i.e., who is in low spirits.

chapman, *n.*

peddler

Like the itinerant merchant it describes, the word is rarely met with nowadays. Synonymous with *peddler*, which the British spell *pedlar*. They hawked *chap-books*, little pamphlets containing street cries, short tales, tracts, and ballads.

char, *n.*

1. cleaning lady

2. tea

1. *Inf.* This word is displeasing to the ladies whom it describes. It is also used in the combinations *charwoman* and *charlady*. The latter is minimally acceptable to these ladies, who generally prefer to be called *daily help*, *daily woman*, or just *daily*.  
 2. *Inf.* The British love their tea and some of the most cultured of them will affectionately offer it to you in the mildly humorous phrase *a cuppa char*. Sometimes the *char* is omitted in this connection and *cuppa* is used alone. No slang American counterpart.

**charabanc, n.****excursion bus**

A term formerly heard. When used, it is pronounced SHARABANG. Now referred to as a *coach*.

**charge-hand, n.****foreman**

The workman *in charge* of a job.

**charge-nurse, n.****head nurse**

In *charge* of a ward. See also **casualty ward**; **sister**.

**charge-sheet, n.****police blotter**

To *take a person in charge* is to *arrest* him.

**charge (something) to tax****impose tax on (something)****charity.** See **as cold as charity**.**Charles's Wain****Ursa Major; Big Dipper**

Other British names for the Big Dipper: *the Plough*; *the Great Bear*; *the Wagon*.

**charley, n., Slang.****Slang. botch job; mess****Charley's dead.** See **slate**.**charlie, n.****Slang. jerk**

*Slang.* *Some charlie has broken my vase! Or, I felt a proper charlie* (i.e., a *real idiot*)! On occasion, *charlie* can take on the connotation of *patsy*; *fall guy*.

**charlies (charleys), n., pl.****Slang. tits**

*Slang.* Synonymous with **Bristols**, but apparently not rhyming slang (see **Appendix II.G.3**); etymology unknown.

**charmer, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* This word now applies to either sex, to mean an attractive person, but in old-fashioned circles the connotation is still feminine. Used of men, it can imply a studied approach to the art of charming.

**chartered accountant****certified public accountant**

Almost always referred to in America as *C.P.A.*

**chartered surveyor****licensed architect****chat show****talk show**

Television term.

**chattermag, n., v.i.****n. chatterbox v.i. babble**

*Inf.* A 'chattering magpie, a much-talking person,' given to gossiping.

**chat up****Slang. hand (someone) a line**

*Slang.* In Britain you *chat up* a person in the attempt to *win him or her over*. When the *chatting up* is directed by a male to a female, there is generally an implication of a sexual objective. *Sweet-talk* is another American equivalent. *Chat* (without the *up*), as in *chat the girls*, means 'flirt with.' Britons also *chat* to a person.

**chaw-bacon**, *n.**Slang.* *Jaw-bacon* is a variant.**rube; hayseed****cheap**, *adj.***inexpensive; reduced (in price)**

In America a lady would express pride in her successful shopping expedition by saying, *The dress was cheap*, or *I bought it cheap*. However, she would not want to refer to the object of her shopping triumph as a *cheap dress*. If she wanted a new dress when the sales were on, she would never ask the saleslady to show her a *cheap dress*. She would ask for a *reduced dress*. Thus, it can be said that, except as a predicate adjective, *cheap* would be avoided in America as a synonym for *inexpensive* because of a reduction. As an attributive adjective, *cheap* in America connotes *tawdriness* in referring to things and persons and has a special slang connotation of *stinginess* when referring to persons, especially in the expression *cheapskate*. These meanings are secondary in the British usage of *cheap*. Thus *cheap tickets*, as advertised on railroad posters, are *excursion fares*, and a *cheap frock* may be a very nice dress indeed, though inexpensive. See **on the cheap**.

**cheapjack**, *n., adj.***hawker**

At fairs, etc. Sometimes it means 'peddler.' *Cheapjack goods* are poor quality stuff, *shoddy*, the sort usually offered by this class of merchant. See **chapman**.

**cheddar**, **hard**. See **Hard cheese!****cheek**, *v.t.**Inf.* **to sass; be fresh to**

*Slang.* To *cheek* someone is to be impudent to rude to him. Not used as a verb in America.

**cheerio!** *interj.**Inf.* **so long!****cheers!** *interj.***here's how!**

*Down the hatch! Here's mud in your eye! Chin chin! Salute! A votre santé! Skol! Prosit!* The British form was originally non-U (see **Appendix I.C.6**) and was frowned on in some U-circles where *Your health!* or *Good luck!* was preferred. It was gradually taken over, perhaps at first facetiously, and is now established practically everywhere.

**cheese it!***Slang.* **pipe down!**

*Slang.* Rather than *Look out! Somebody's coming!* or *Make yourself scarce!*

**cheesed off***Slang.* **teed off**

*Slang.* Synonymous with **brassed off**.

**cheese off!****get lost!**

*Slang.* Synonymous with **buzz off**.

**cheese-paring**, *adj., n.***penny-pinching**

A *cheese-paring* chap is a *stingy* one, and the noun *cheese-paring* describes this sorry attitude toward life. As a plural noun *cheese-parings* means 'junk,' odds and ends that ought to be thrown away. In this connection, see also **lumber**.

**cheesy**, *adj.**Slang.* **swanky**

*Slang.* In the sense of 'stylish' or 'chic,' the British and American meanings are directly opposite. This British use is going out; some say that it is already obso-

lete, but it is still heard occasionally in the countryside, among old folk. Along with the passing of its use in the first sense, the word has now acquired the American meaning in Britain.

### Chelsea bun

approx. Danish

A rolled currant bun, usually with icing.

**chemist, dispensing.** See **dispenser**.

### chemist's shop

drugstore; pharmacy

The *shop* can be omitted. See also **dispenser**.

### cheque, *n.*

check

A matter of spelling. But isn't it peculiar that a *check* (or *cheque*) is a form of *draft*, that *draft* is sometimes spelled *draught*, and that *draughts* is the British form of *checkers*? In Britain, a *checking account* is a *cheque account*, a *current account*, or a *running account*.

### Chequers, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

Official country residence of the Prime Minister, in Buckinghamshire.

### chesterfield, *n.*

sofa

In America a *chesterfield* is a dark overcoat, usually with a velvet collar. The British *chesterfield* is a large overstuffed sofa, with a back and upholstered arms. In Canada, the term is applied to any large sofa or couch.

### chest of drawers

bureau; dresser

In Britain a **bureau** is a writing desk with drawers of the sort Americans refer to as a *secretary*, and a **dresser** is a *kitchen sideboard with shelves*.

### chevy, also chivy, *v.t.*

Inf. keep after; pursue

Inf. Also *chivvy*. To *put pressure* on someone; to *hurry him up*, in the sense of 'chase' him. Probably there is some connection with *Chevy Chase*, an old ballad, and a place on the Scottish border.

### chewing gum

gum

In Britain **gum** by itself would be taken to mean 'mucilage.' The British are rapidly moving toward full acceptance of chewing gum.

### chicken, *n.*

young chicken

*Chicken* in America covers any size or age. An old one in Britain would be called a *fowl* (or a *boiler*), and *chicken yard* in American would be *fowl-run* in Britain.

### chicken-flesh, *n.*

Inf. goose pimples

Inf. Usually *goose-flesh* in Britain. *Goose pimples* is considered an Americanism in Britain.

### chicory, *n.*

endive

In a British **greengrocer's**, ask for *chicory* if you want *endive*—and vice versa!

### chief bridesmaid

maid of honor

### chief editor

editor in chief

**child-battering**

*Battering* is used for *beating* also in the expression *wife-battering*. But note that the American term *child abuse* may also imply sexual abuse in Britain.

**child beating****child-minder, n.**

The understanding is that both parents are absent. The term *babysitter* is becoming common in Britain. Also called a **sitter-in**.

**babysitter****chilled distribution****(delivery by) refrigerated truck****Chiltern Hundreds**

SEE COMMENT

This name is derived from the term *hundred*, a now obsolete subdivision of a county, with its own court and other administrative features. These courts were abolished over a century ago. Three of these English hundreds in the County of Buckinghamshire, named Stoke, Burnham, and Desborough, came to be known as the *Chiltern Hundreds* because of their situation in the Chiltern Hills. The *Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds* is a nominal office under the Chancellor of the Exchequer, an "office of honour and profit under the crown," the holding of which has been considered, since 1701, incompatible with membership in the House of Commons. Since the middle of the 18th century a Member who held the office was required to vacate his seat in the Commons. Hence, to *apply for* or *accept the Chiltern Hundreds* (i.e., the stewardship thereof) means to 'resign one's seat' in the House of Commons. Since a Member is not allowed to resign his seat before the expiration of his term of office, the only way he can vacate the seat is to *apply for the Chiltern Hundreds*.

**chimney-piece, n.****mantelpiece****chimney-pot, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A metal or earthenware pipe added to the top of a chimney; ubiquitous in Britain (and much of Europe). Its function is to improve the draft and disperse the smoke. A *chimney-pot hat* is a *stovepipe*. This is sometimes shortened to *chimney-pot*, omitting the *hat*, like *stovepipe*.

**chine, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Apart from its meanings shared with American English (backbone, part of the backbone of an animal cut for cooking, ridge, crest, intersection of sides and bottom of a ship), a *chine* is also a deep ravine, but only on the Isle of Wight and in Dorset.

**chip, n.****1. wood sliver****2. fruit basket**

1. The thin material from which fruit and vegetable baskets are made. See **pun-net**.
2. The basket itself.

**chip, v.t., Inf.****tease; kid**

As in, *They chipped me about my boy-friend*.

**chip in****Inf. butt in; break in**

*Inf.* In the sense of interrupting somebody else's conversation, a meaning not used in America, where it means to 'contribute,' in the way children make up a

fund to buy their teacher a gift. The British use it that way too, and also have another phrase for that: to *pay one's whack*.

**chipolata, n.** **small pork sausage**  
(Pronounced CHIPPO-LAH'-TA.) The spicy meat is mixed with meal. The best are those ground, blended, and stuffed by your own butcher.

**chippings, loose.** See **loose chippings**.

**chips, n. pl.** **French fried potatoes**  
*Inf.* One sees *French fried potatoes* on some British menus nowadays. See also **crisps** and **fish 'n' chips**.

**chit, n.** **memo**  
The British use it as well in its American meaning of an 'I.O.U.,' usually for drink or food in a club or military mess, or at a bar or pub. See **on the slate**.

**chivy or chivvy.** See **chevy**.

**chock-a-block** **crammed together**  
*Inf.* Rarely heard in America. Synonymous with *completely full*. See also **packed out with**.

**chocker** *Inf. disgusted; fed up*  
*Slang.* From **chock-a-block**.

**choked, adj.** **disgruntled**  
*Slang.* Synonymous with **chuffed, 2; disappointed**.

**chocolate vermicelli** **chocolate sprinkles**  
See also **hundreds and thousands**. Britain and America know and use *vermicelli* as forms of spaghetti.

**choose how** *Inf. like it or not*  
*Inf.* A north of England term.

**chop, n., v.t., v.i.** *approx. change*  
A special use of *chop* in the expression *chop and change*, which, used transitively, means to 'keep changing' (e.g., to keep trading in your car for a new one). To *chop and change*, used intransitively, means to 'shilly-shally.' To *chop in* (a variant of *chip in*) is to 'break into a conversation, to 'put in your two cents' worth.' To *chop logic* is to 'argue for argument's sake.'

**chops of the Channel** *SEE COMMENT*  
*Inf.* Passage from the Atlantic Ocean into the English Channel, so-called because of the short, broken waves of the sea there.

**chough, n.** **red-legged crow**  
(Pronounced CHUFF.) A fairly common crow in some parts of Britain, notable for its plaintive cry like a kitten's. Once believed to have swallowed the soul of King Arthur. This name is included here because of the West Country expression *as the chough flies*, a variant of *as the crow flies*.

**Christian name****first name**

Americans also say *Christian name* and *given name* but *first name* is much more common. See also **middle name**.

**Christmas club**

SEE COMMENT

Different from the American scheme of the same name; a special sort of layaway plan. In Britain one can join a Christmas club usually during the summer at a neighborhood butcher shop or grocery store, accumulating modest periodic deposits there to lessen the impact of the holiday bills for the turkey or roast beef and its trappings.

**chucker-out**, *n.*, *Slang*.*Slang*. **bouncer****chuffed**, *adj.***1. delighted****2. disgruntled**

*Slang*. This curious bit of antiquated army slang has two diametrically opposite meanings, depending on the context. One can say *chuffed pink* (tickled pink) to mean 'pleased,' or *dead chuffed* to mean 'displeased.' In the second sense, *chuffed* is synonymous with **choked**.

**chump**, *n.**Inf.* **nut**

*Slang*. *Chump*, like *loaf*, *nod*, and other words, is a slang term for *head*, like *bean* in America. *Use your chump* is commonly heard, inviting the party addressed to stop being a fool. To be *off one's chump* is to be *off one's nut*.

**chump chop**

SEE COMMENT

Type of lamb chop. In the food department it designates the thick end of a loin of mutton, hence *chump chop*, meaning a 'mutton' or 'lamb chop' which (as opposed to a rib chop) is mostly meat surrounding a little bit of bone. See **Appendix II.H**.

**Chunnel**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* English Channel tunnel.**chunter**, *v.i.**Inf.* **blab on and on***Inf.* Like **rabbit on**.**C.I.D.**

SEE COMMENT

The initials stand for *Criminal Investigation Department*. A *C.I.D. man* is a plain-clothes detective, a *Cop In Disguise*.

**cider**, *n.***hard cider**

*Cider*, in Britain, is always fermented and alcoholic. Americans distinguish between *cider* (which the British call *apple juice*, as do many Americans) and *hard cider*, which is simply *cider* to the British. In addition, there is a delicious British drink called *vintage cider*, which has the consistency of good sherry and is at least as strong. See also **scrump**.

**cinecamera**, *n.***movie camera****cinema**, *n.***movie house**

In America, its connotation is technical rather than popular. See also **film**; **flicks**; **pictures**.

**Cinque Ports**

SEE COMMENT

(Pronounced SINK PORTS.) Literally (from Old French via Middle English) 'Five Ports' on the southeast coast of Britain. The five ports are actually seven plus *Ten-terden*: *Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover, Sandwich, Winchelsea*, and *Rye*. They were instructed to protect England from possible invasion from the south.

**cipher.** See **nought**.

**circs., n. pl.**

**circumstances**

*Inf.* One of those abbreviations the British like, not only written *circs.*, but pronounced SERKS. See **Appendix I.D.9**.

**circular road**

**belt highway**

See **ring-road**; **orbital**.

**circular saw**

**buzz saw**

**circumbendibus, n.**

**1. roundabout route or method****2. long-winded story****3. circumlocution**

*Inf.* An old-fashioned jocularity involving mock Latin. Cf. **omnium gatherum**.

**Circus, n.**

**Circle**

Used in cities where Americans would normally use *Circle*; thus Piccadilly *Circus*, Oxford *Circus*, etc., as compared with, e.g., *Columbus Circle* in New York.

**(the) City, n.**

*Inf.* **Wall Street; financial district**

*Inf.* The *City* of London is a precise geographical section of London and is chief among several *Cities* (e.g., the *City* of Westminster) which are incorporated in London. The *City* of London includes the financial district, and *the City*, as an abbreviation of the *City of London*, is used in Britain exactly as *Wall Street* is used in America. Geographically the *City* is larger than the London financial district which it includes, whereas *Wall Street* is only a part of the New York financial district in which it is included. The *City* measures one square mile and has 5,000 residents; and the sovereign of Great Britain and Northern Ireland cannot enter it without the Lord Mayor's permission. The *City editor* of a London newspaper is what would be called the *financial editor* in America (but *city editor*, in America, means the person in charge of local news). See also **Throgmorton Street**.

**City editor**

**financial editor**

See under **City**.

**city boundary**

**city limits**

**civilities, n. pl.** See **amenities**.

**civil servant**

**government employee**

The *civil service* is a term familiar to Americans, but Americans in the civil service have expressed resentment at being referred to as *civil servants* and prefer to be known as *government employees*.

**(the) Civil War**

SEE COMMENT

War between Charles I and Parliament. This war was fought in the 17th century between the Royalists supporting King Charles I and the Roundheads led by Oliver Cromwell, ending with the beheading of Charles (or "Charles the Martyr," as true blue Royalists called him).

**Civvy Street**, *Slang*.**civilian life****claim against tax****take as a deduction**

Tax terminology.

**clap**, *v.t.***applaud**

*Clap*, in the sense of 'applaud,' is used intransitively in America. In Britain, one *claps* a performer; in America, one *applauds* that performer.

**clap eyes on**, *Slang*.*Inf.* **set eyes on****clapped out***Slang.* **tuckered out**

*Slang.* Frazzled; beat. See **fag**; **knock up**; **cooked**; **creased**; **flake out**; **jiggered**; **spun**.

**clapper bridge**

SEE COMMENT

A primitive type of bridge found in the West Country, consisting of large stones (five or six feet long by two or three feet wide, and about one foot thick) laid flat on boulders spaced about four feet apart across small streams.

**clapper-claw**, *v.t.***beat up**

*Slang.* *Clapper-claw* is often used intransitively in a figurative sense to mean 'claw one's way', e.g. to the top in a toughly competitive industry, or in politics.

**class**, *n.***grade**

University term. In America, one's *college class* is the *year of graduation*. In Britain one's *class at university* is the place in the honours examinations, e.g., a *first*, an *upper* or *good second* or *lower second* (sometimes called a 2.1 or 2.2), or a *third*. *Class* is understood.

**classic races**. See under **guinea**.**clawback**, *n.***ass-kisser** *Slang*.*Slang*.**clean**, *v.t.***shine**Referring to shoes. See also **blanco**.**clear majority****majority**

In British voting terminology, *majority* means what in America is called a *plurality*. To indicate an arithmetical majority, i.e., more than 50 percent, the British use the term *clear* or *absolute majority*.

**clearway**, *n.***no-stopping thoroughfare****cleg**, *n.***horsefly**

**clerk, n.**

**1. lawyer's assistant**

**2. church officer**

**3. town officer**

**4. office or store worker**

(Pronounced CLARK.) This word originally meant 'clergyman' in Britain, but that meaning is now archaic.

1. It is commonly used by British **solicitors** (*lawyers*) to describe their assistants, and *law clerk* is a term not unknown in America.

2. The job of a lay person who renders miscellaneous services to a parish church.

3. An official, usually a lawyer, in charge of town records, who acts generally as the business representative of a town.

4. *Bank clerks, shop clerks, and the like, are general office workers* who keep books, do filing, and take care of miscellaneous office functions.

**clerk of the works**

**supply man; maintenance man**

This title denotes a person who acts as overseer of supplies and building materials for a contractor on a particular construction site, and acts as a kind of progress reporter, on site, among customer, contractor, and architect. This term also covers the position of one in charge of repairs and maintenance, such as outside painting and sidewalk repair, for instance, of a municipal housing unit (**council house estate**).

**clever Dick, Slang.**

*Slang.* **wise guy**

**clinking, adj.**

*Slang.* **damned good**

*Slang.* Thus, a *clinking game*, a *clinking race*, etc. It can also be used adverbially modifying *good*: a *clinking good game*, a *clinking good race*. See also **rattling; thundering**.

**clippie, n.**

**bus conductress**

*Inf.* In Britain there are bus conductors of both sexes. A male conductor is simply a *conductor*; a female *conductor* is a *clippie*. Both male and female bus conductors used to *clip* your ticket, i.e., *punch* your ticket, but only the lady conductors are called *clippies*. The word came into being during wartime when they replaced the men. It is going out of fashion now.

**cloakroom, n.**

**washroom**

Both terms are euphemisms for *toilet*, but beware: Following a *cloakroom* sign in a public place in Britain may lead you to another destination, because it is also used literally in that country. The British term *cloakroom ticket* means 'baggage check' or 'hat check.' See **loo**.

**clobber, n.**

**1. Inf. get-up**

**2. Inf. gear**

1. *Slang.* This word means 'attire' and is generally used when there is something peculiar about the attire, as for example, *He appeared in the strangest clobber*, or *He had borrowed somebody else's clobber*. See **rig-out**.

2. *Slang.* The word acquired the further meaning of 'gear,' 'junk,' 'one's full equipment' in World War I.

**close, n.**

**dead-end residential area**

(Pronounced CLOCE.) A *close* is a kind of *cul-de-sac* broadened out at its end. The term is used also to describe the enclosed land around a cathedral.

**close crop, n.**See also **short back and sides**.**crew cut****close season**Referring to hunting, fishing, etc. Here, the British omit the *d*. It's turned the other way around in the legal phrase *closed company* (British) for *close corporation*. See **Appendix I.A.3**.**closed season****closet, n.**A euphemism. *Water closet* is old-fashioned British for *lavatory*. *Closet* (see **pedestal**) is the polite term seen in house-furnishing catalogues for the bowl itself. A *clothes closet* in Britain is a *cupboard*.**toilet bowl****close the doors, please!**

Heard in railroad stations and often followed by "Train is about to depart!"

**all aboard!****closing-down sale**

Although sometimes it seems to mean only a 'closeout' of a particular item or line of merchandise.

**liquidation sale****closing time.** See **during hours**.**closure, n.**

The British form for 'cutting off debate' is not generally used in America, and vice versa.

**cloture****clot, n.***Slang*. A strong pejorative. "She is suffering from marital thrombosis," quipped the doctor's wife. "She's got a *clot* for a husband."*Slang*. **jerk****cloth, washing-up.** See **tea-towel; washing-up cloth**.**cloth-cap, adj.***Inf*. **blue-collar****cloth-eared, adj., inf.**

Characterizing someone who either purposely or through lack of attention misunderstands what is said to him.

**deaf****clothes-peg, n.****clothespin****clothes-prop, n.****clothespole****clotted cream.** See **Devonshire cream**.**clubland, n.**

SEE COMMENT

St. James's, an area of London including the palace of that name. It is bounded on the north by Jermyn Street, on the west by St. James's Street, on the south by Pall Mall (pronounced *Pell Mell* or *Pal Mal*), and on the east by Lower Regent Street, and is called 'clubland' because it houses many of London's famous clubs. *St. James's* palace was once the royal residence, and although it has not been so used since the time of Queen Victoria, the British court is still designated as 'the Court of St. James's.'

**club together, v.i.****join up; pool**

Britons, as well as Americans, *club together* to buy a going-away gift for a friend or a memento for a retiring colleague.

**clue, n.****notion**

*I haven't a clue* is a common expression in Britain, meaning 'I haven't the slightest idea.' It is interchangeable with another British expression: *I haven't the foggiest*. *He hasn't a clue*, however, means 'he is hopelessly ignorant or stupid.' If the pronoun is third person, of either gender or number, the expression is pejorative. See next entry.

**clueless, adj.****Inf. hopeless**

*Inf.* Describing someone who doesn't know what it's all about or which end is up. See also **clue**.

**clutch, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* *Clutch*, in addition to its other uses as noun and verb, means a 'set of eggs,' or a 'brood of chickens.' *Clutch* is also used in *a clutch of friends* to indicate a swarm of followers that might surround a movie star or other celebrity.

**clutter, n.****junk**

*Clutter* literally means *litter* or any untidy miscellany in both countries. But whereas an American might say, *Our weekend guests arrived with an awful lot of junk*, a Briton would probably describe them as having brought along a great deal of *clutter*. See also **lumber**.

C.M.G. See under V.C.

**coach, n.****inter-city bus**

See also **carriage** and **motor coach**.

**coarse, adj.****common**

A special meaning applied to fresh water fish: *coarse* would exclude salmon and trout and other sporting fish caught with a fly. *Coarse* fish are run-of-the-mill types.

**coatee, n.****short coat**

Worn by women and infants. In American, a *coatee* historically has been a short coat with tails.

**cob, n.****wall material**

A mixture of clay, gravel, and straw.

**cobble, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Lump coal the size of smallish cobblestones.

**cobble, v.t.****run up; put together roughly**

To *cobble* something, or to *cobble* something *together*, is to put it together roughly. A professor in a hurry will *cobble* a lecture together. This verb is used also to mean 'mend' or 'patch,' especially of shoes, indicating its back formation from *cobbler*, which in Britain means not only 'shoemaker,' but also 'clumsy workman,' a sense archaic in American usage.

**cobblers**, *n. pl., interj.*

SEE COMMENT

Cockney rhyming slang (see **Appendix II.G.3**) omitting, as usual, the rhyming word; short for *cobblers' awls*, rhyming with *balls*, so that its meaning as an interjection is 'balls!' particularly in the sense of 'forget it!' said in response to a preposterous proposal. As a noun, it is used to describe anything considered rubbish or nonsense, as in *That's a lot of cobblers!*

**cock**, *n.*

*Slang. bull*

*Slang. Stuff and nonsense.* We've all heard of *cock and bull* stories. The British have chosen the *cock*, the Americans the *bull*. Americans are squeamish about using *cock*. Britons have mocked such delicacy by referring to *roostertails* for preprandial drinks, *pet roosters* for *petcocks*, *roostered hat*, *go off half-roostered*, and similar constructions. However, *cock* is generally taboo in mixed company, except when it clearly refers to the male bird, or in **that cock won't fight**.

**cock-a-hoop**, *adj., Slang.*

*Inf. on top of the world*

Exultant and boastful, as in *His cock-a-hoop chortling could be heard everywhere.*

**cock a snook**

*Slang. thumb one's nose*

*Slang.* (*Snook* rhymes with *COOK*.) Sometimes *cock snooks*.

**cockchafer**, *n.*

**June bug**

The noisy beetle that usually arrives in May. The British are amused by the American name because **bug**, to them, normally means 'bedbug.'

**Cocker.** See **according to Cocker**.

**cockerel**, *n.*

**1. young rooster**

**2. young tough**

1. Americans, too, occasionally use this word to mean a 'young rooster.'

2. Metaphorical extension. But not heard in America in this sense.

**cockney**, *n., adj.*

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Also used adjectivally meaning, literally, 'characteristic of a born **East Ender**.' A *cockney* accent is not deemed one of the more socially acceptable ways to pronounce English. But those possessing such an accent are often very proud of it and during the 60s it became a fashionable accent to attempt to imitate. See also **Bow Bells**.

**cockshy.** See **coconut shy**.

**cock-up**, *n.*

*Inf. mess; muddle*

*Slang.* *You've never seen such a cock-up in your life!* (The bank robbers got away and the police arrested the bank manager by mistake.) See also discussion under **balls**, 2.

**coconut shy**

SEE COMMENT

A game in fairs, in which the contestant throws balls at a heap of coconuts (pronounced **COKER-NUTS**) for prizes. More or less interchangeable with *cockshy*, which is somewhat more general, in that it includes any game in which balls or sticks are thrown at a variety of targets. A *cockshy* may be the target itself, and the word is also used figuratively to mean a 'butt.' *Cockshy* is also used to mean 'trial balloon': *I put up a cockshy memorandum* (to test opinion).

**cod**, *n., v.t., v.i.*

1. *n.*, joke; parody; take-off
2. *v.t., v.i.*, tease; spoof
3. *Slang. v.i.*, horse around

*Slang.* In the first meaning, *cod* is used attributively in expressions like a *cod version* of "Hamlet" or a *cod cockney accent*.

**codswallop**, *n.**Slang. baloney*

*Slang.* (Pronounced and sometimes spelled COD'S WALLOP.) *Hot air.* Origin unknown. See also **gammon**; **rot**; **balls**; **rubbish**; **all my eye and Betty Martin**! and **cobblers**.

**C. of E.****Church of England**

The established church. See **chapel**; **dissenter**; **nonconformist**.

**coffee sugar**

SEE COMMENT

Sugar in large crystals, usually brown or honey-colored; occasionally varicolored. Americans tend to approach it cautiously, and it makes for table talk. The usual name for it in shops is *sugar crystals*. See also **demerara**.

**coffee-stall**, *n.***street coffee stand**

Similar to the hot dog wagon and pretzel stand seen on the streets of some American cities.

**coiner**, *n., inf.***counterfeiter**

Of counterfeit coins, that is.

**collar stud****collar button**

Used when shirts had detachable collars.

**collar-work.** See **against the collar**.

**collections**, *n. pl.***mid-years**

Term-end examinations at Oxford and elsewhere. See **college**.

**college**, *n.***school; house (dormitory)**

This word, which in American educational terminology always denotes an institution of higher learning and is roughly synonymous with *university*, does not necessarily mean the same thing in Britain. Eton College and Lancing College are what are known as **public schools**, roughly equivalent to what Americans call *prep schools*, and City of London College is a secretarial school. On the other hand, the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge (about twenty-five at each) are more or less autonomous institutions each with its own buildings, including hall of residence (see **hall**)—*house*, in the American 'college dormitory' sense—dining-halls, chapel, principal's residence (see under **Fellow**), bedrooms and studies for Fellows (see also **don**), tutors (advisers) and undergraduates (students), senior and junior common-rooms, and campus (**quad** at Oxford, **court** at Cambridge). Some colleges, like All Souls and St Antony's, Oxford, are for graduates only. Most are now coeducational. The phrase *college graduate* would not be used in Britain. The person would be called a *university man or woman*, or *graduate*. *College* is also applied to learned or professional institutions, such as the Royal College of Physicians.

**college grounds****campus**

*Campus* is used increasingly in Britain, especially at the newer (**redbrick**) universities.

**college of further education***approx.* **extension school**

For persons who have left school and wish to continue their general education or learn a trade.

**colleger, n.**

SEE COMMENT

One of the 70 (out of 1,100) Eton students who live *in college* (i.e., *on campus*; see **college**). The others are called **oppidans**.

**collier, n.****coal freighter**

It means 'coal miner' in Britain as well, but not in America.

**Collins, n.***Inf.* **bread-and-butter letter**

*Inf.* Synonymous with **roofer**. Now obsolescent.

**coloured, adj., n.***approx.* **non-white**

*Colored* in America signifies black, whether of African or West Indian origin. In Britain the term includes Indians, Pakistanis, and persons of mixed parentage. Unfortunately, it has also become a noun in Britain, often in the plural.

**colt, n.****1. Slang. rookie****2. approx. junior varsity player**

**1. *Inf.*** In professional cricket, a player in his first season.

**2. *Inf.*** At school it can refer to a boy who is a member of any junior team, not necessarily cricket.

In America, neither sense is heard.

**combination-room, n.****common-room**

Meeting-room at Cambridge University. There is a junior combination-room for undergraduates. The senior combination-room is for **Fellows**.

**combinations, n. pl.****union suit**

Referring to underwear. *Union suits* are on the way out in America. *Combinations* are dying out more slowly in Britain. **Combs** (short *o*; the *b* is silent) is an informal abbreviation.

**comb-out, n.****intensive search**

*Inf.* Sometimes the Americans also use *comb* or *combing* for this process.

**combs.** See **combinations**.

**come, v.t.****act**

*Slang.* To *come* the hero or the bereaved spouse is to *act* the part, to *put it on*.

**come a cropper***Inf.* **take a tumble**

*Inf.* Fail in an endeavor.

**come a mucker.** See under **mucker**.

**come a purler***Slang. fall on one's face*

*Slang.* Like the American equivalent, used both literally and figuratively. Thus, it might apply not only to the physical act of stumbling, but also to a business or theatrical fiasco, or the messing up of plans for a picnic.

**comeback, n.***Slang. oomph*

*Inf.* A person who does not have much *comeback* is one who does not have much *on the ball*; i.e., is dull and not very good company.

**come-by-chance, n.****love child**

*Inf.* See **chance-child**.

**come-day-go-day, adj.****shiftless**

*Too easygoing, apathetic*; a drifter. It sometimes has the additional connotation of carelessness about money—*easy come, easy go*.

**come down****1. graduate****2. SEE COMMENT**

1. *Inf.* This is a university term. To *come down* is to *graduate*.

2. *Inf.* To leave university finally or to commence vacation. A vacation from work, generally, is called a **holiday** in Britain; but in university life, holidays at Christmas, Easter, and the summer hiatus are known as *vacations*, and the same is true of the Law Court calendar. The long university summer vacation is known as the *long vac*. *Come down* means the same thing as *go down*, and the choice of phrase depends on the vantage point of the speaker: if you are at the university you talk of *going down*; the student's parents, however, would talk to their friends and relations about Sam's *coming down*. It depends on the position of the speaker in relation to the university. *Come down* and *go down* are not to be confused with **send down**, also a university term, meaning 'expel.' No colloquial American counterpart.

**come expensive***Inf. come to a lot*

*Inf.* To *cost too much*.

**come home trumps. See come up trumps.****come it strong***Inf. lay it on thick*

*Inf.* To *overdo it*. Applies, e.g., to excessive demands. It has been used about an ostentatious party: *That's coming it strong, isn't it?*

**come on****menstruate**

*Inf.* One of many euphemisms.

**come on to****begin**

Thus: *It came on to snow last night*.

**come over, v.i.***Inf. go (become)*

*Inf.* As in *I was so astounded I came over numb*.

**come the acid***Slang. be a wise guy*

*Slang.* Usually in the negative imperative: *Don't come the acid with me!* as a reproof given to a smart alec who has given a snide answer to a question. Has other shades of meaning as well, depending on context: 'exaggerate,' 'be too big for

one's breeches,' 'try to burden someone else with one's own job,' generally, to 'make oneself objectionable.'

**come top**  
*Inf.* To win.

*Inf.* come out on top

**come to the horses**, *Slang.*

*Slang.* get down to brass tacks

**come to the wrong shop**. See **shop**.

**come up trumps**

*Inf.* come up roses

*Inf.* Also *turn up trumps* and *come home trumps*. In context, it means 'not fail or disappoint,' to 'be there when you're needed': *He came up trumps when the going was bad.*

**comforter**, *n.*

1. baby pacifier

2. woolen scarf

Two distinct meanings, as opposed to the American meaning of *comforter*, which is 'quilt.' See also **duvet**; **eiderdown**.

**comic**, *n.*

humorous comic

Americans use the term *comics* to designate all narrative newspaper strips, whether horror, macabre, tales of adventure, or funny. In Britain, the term tends to mean 'funny comics,' unless otherwise specified, e.g., as in *horror comic*.

**coming**, *adv.*

going on

Used adverbially in expressions of age: *Mary is coming seventeen.*

**command paper**. See **Paper**.

**commem**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Abbreviation of *commemoration*, an annual celebration at Oxford in commemoration of founders and benefactors.

**commercial traveller**

traveling salesman

In the proper context, *traveller* by itself is understood in this sense.

**commission agent**

bookmaker

A lofty euphemism. See also **turf accountant**.

**commissionaire**, *n.*

uniformed doorman and the like

In Britain, *commissionaires*, usually doormen but sometimes also messengers and other types of clerk, are normally pensioned military men. More specifically, they are members of the *Corps of Commissionaires*, an organization formed many years ago to provide decent employment for ex-regular army men, and run on military lines. A more common British term is **porter**.

**Commissioner for Oaths**

notary public

**commode**, *n.*

chamber pot

*Commode* in America usually means a 'chest of drawers.' It has the secondary meaning there, rarely used, of a chest or box holding the chamber pot. In Britain, it signifies this homely commodity, usually in the form of a chest or chair.

**Common Entrance Examinations**

SEE COMMENT

Prep school entrance exams. *Prep school*, in the American sense, is what the British call **public school**. *Common Entrance Examinations*, though national in scope, are prepared by a private body organized by the public schools of Britain. The same entrance examinations are given to all candidates for the schools, but each public school has its own requirements as to the grades achieved in these examinations. See also **council school**.

**commoner, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Anyone below the rank of **peer**.

**common lodging-house.** See **Rowton House**.

**(the) Commons, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Shortening of *House of Commons*, the lower legislative chamber. The upper one, the House of Lords, is a respected debating chamber but has little power in normal times except to delay or amend non-financial measures.

**company, n.****corporation**

A business term; sometimes called *limited company* or *limited liability company*, the essence of this form of business organization in either country being the *limitation* of its liability to the value of its net worth, thus insulating from risk other assets of the individual(s) involved. *Ltd.* is the British equivalent of *Inc.* *Company* does not necessarily connote incorporation in either country. It may denote a partnership or even a sole proprietorship. See **corporation**.

**company director.** See **director**.

**compensation, n.****damages**

In America, *compensation* includes not only *damages* but also more generally, *emolument* or *payment*, whether salary or fee. In Britain *compensation* is not used except to indicate *restitution* or *damages* after suffering physical injury or any other kind of loss.

**compère, n.****master of ceremonies; emcee**

(Pronounced COM'-PARE.)

**completion, n.****title closing**

Term used in real estate transactions.

**compliments slip**

SEE COMMENT

A transmittal slip, usually printed, that is sent with enclosures by professionals and tradesmen, and sometimes accompanies their bills. The slip contains the phrase *With compliments*, followed by the name and address of the sender. The phrase does not mean that the sender is giving anything away, as it might suggest in America, where *With so-and-so's compliments* indicates a gift.

**compositor, n.****typesetter**

**comprehensive school.** See **eleven plus**.

**compulsory purchase**

A legal term, meaning the forcible sale to a public authority of property for public use, pursuant to the right of eminent domain.

**condemnation****conchy, n., Slang.****conscientious objector****confectioner's, n.****candy store**

Synonymous with **sweet-shop**.

**confidence trick****confidence game****confined to barracks****Inf. confined to quarters**

*Int.* An ambulatory but slowly convalescing invalid might say: *I'd love to come, but I'm afraid I'm confined to barracks.*

**confinement theatre.** See **theatre**.**conjurer, conjuror, n.****magician**

All three terms are used in both countries.

**conk, n.****1. Slang. beak (nose)****2. Slang. noodle (head)**

*Slang.* In meaning 2., it is used in the expression *off one's conk, i.e., nuts*. Synonymous with **loaf**.

**conker, n.****1. horse chestnut****2. rubber**

*Slang.* No American slang equivalent. Meaning 2. applies exclusively to the game of darts, which is standard equipment at every proper British pub. When the game score is one-all, if there's time someone says, *Let's play the conker*, meaning the *rubber*. See also the next entry.

**conkers, n. pl.****horse chestnut game**

Every child has a string with a horse chestnut (called a **conker**) tied to the end, and, in turn, tries to break the other children's chestnuts.

**conservancy, n.****river or port commission**

For example, the Thames Conservancy.

**conservatoire, n.****conservatory (music school)**

*Conservatory*, in Britain, would usually mean 'greenhouse,' but it can also be used to mean a 'music school.'

**consignment note****bill of lading**

Railroad term.

**consols, n. pl.****SEE COMMENT**

Abbreviation of *consolidated annuities*, government securities of Great Britain which were consolidated in 1751 into 3 percent bonds, which in Britain are known as stocks. They have no maturity, but are part of the national debt. There are now both  $2\frac{1}{2}$  percent and 4 percent *consols* which sell at heavy discounts that vary with fluctuations in prevailing interest rates. Accent on either syllable.

**constable, n.****policeman; patrolman**

A *constable* is a *policeman* and is the usual form of address to a policeman below the rank of sergeant. A *chief constable* would be known in America as a *chief of police*. See also **bobby** for slang synonyms, and **P.C.**

**constituency, n.****district**

A *Parliamentary constituency* is roughly equivalent, in British politics, to a *Congressional district* in America. See also **Member**.

**construe, n.****construction**

Used as a noun, it means an 'exercise in syntactical analysis,' as in the teacher's warning: *Next Tuesday, we'll have a construe of an **unseen*** (a passage for sight translation).

**consultant, n.****1. specialist (medical)****2. counsel (legal)**

These are special meanings in the respective professions, but the word has the same general meaning as in America. For those unfamiliar with the American term *counsel* as used in definition 2., it applies to a lawyer sharing quarters and loosely connected with a law firm but not acting as a partner.

**content, n., adv.****aye**

House of Lords voting terminology. *Not content* means 'nay'. The *contents* are the *ayevoters*. (Accent on the second syllable.) Cf. **placet**.

**continental quilt.** See **duvet**.

**contract hire****lease**

For instance, rental of office equipment or farm machinery, for a specified period after which it must go back to the owner, as opposed to *lease*, in the British usage, implying (in this connection) that after the initial hiring period, the item may be kept under an agreed extension of the original term.

**convener, also convenor.** See under **works**.

**convenience, n.****rest room**

A masterpiece of understatement for a public lavatory, one of life's necessities! A *public convenience* is often called a *comfort station* in both countries—a battle of euphemisms. See **cloakroom; loo**.

**cool!, interj.****Slang. gee! gosh!**

**Slang.** See also **cor!**

**cooee, coo-ee, cooey.** See **within cooee (coo-ee) of**

**cook, v.t.****Slang. juggle**

**Slang.** To *cook* records or accounts is to *tamper with* them. In Britain people *cook the books*. In America this reprehensible practice is known as *juggling the books* as well as *cooking the books*. Synonymous with **fiddle**.

**cooked, adj., Slang.****1. Slang. baked****2. Slang. tuckered out**

**1.** Especially after sitting in the sun.

**2.** Or *beat*, like an exhausted runner. See **clapped out; fag; knock up, 2**.

**cooker, n.**

*Cooker* is the normal British word for *stove*. A Briton would hardly ever say *electric stove*, but *gas stove* is heard.

**stove****cookery book**

See **Appendix I.A.3.**

**cook book**

**cop.** See **not much cop.**

**coper, n.**

Also seen as *horse-coper* and *horse-dealer*.

**horse trader****copper, n.**

Neither the word (in this sense) nor the appliance is much used nowadays; but they exist and persist. The word has two slang meanings: 'cop' (see **bobby**), and 'penny' (see **brown**).

**laundry boiler****copper-bottomed, adj.**

*Inf.* Often *one hundred percent copper-bottomed*, and most frequently applied to financial matters. The usage arises from the image of a ship so treated, so that its bottom tends to resist the onset of barnacles. This is reinforced by the belief that copper-bottomed pans are more solid and last longer than those not so equipped. In another context, modifying the noun *excuse*, it is the equivalent of *airtight*.

**Inf. cast-iron; sound****copperplate printing**

As on stationery, calling cards, and so on.

**engraving****copse, n., v.t.**

This is a shortening of *coppice*, a noun shared with America. As a verb it means to 'cover (an area) with woods.'

**small wood (wooded area)****cor! interj.**

*Slang.* A corruption of *God*. See **blimey**; **coo**.

**Slang. gee! gosh!****coracle, n.**

Welsh and Irish inland waterways wicker boat, formerly made by craftspeople.

**basket-shaped boat****cor anglais**

The British call it by the French name. *Cor* by itself refers to the *tenor oboe*.

**English horn****co-respondent shoes**

*Jocular.* The flashy, disreputable type, usually brown and white. In easy no-fault divorce, there is no need for co-respondents.

**two-toned shoes****corf, n.**

After one catches a fish in Britain, is kept it alive in a *corf* or a creel submerged in water. Plural *corves*.

**creel****corn, n.**

The American term *corn* has its equivalent in the British word *maize*, but more and more the British use the term *sweet corn*, though it is hard to grow in Britain and is not nearly as commonly found there as in America. The British use the noun *corn* as a synonym for the American term *grain*. See **Indian meal**.

**grain**

**corned beef**

What the Americans call *corned beef* is known as *salt beef* in Britain.

**canned pressed beef****(The) Corner, n.**

*Slang.* The *Corner* is slang for the betting establishment known as Tattersall's (betting rooms), which was originally located in London near Hyde Park Corner.

*Slang.* **bookie's joint****corner-boy, n.** *Slang.**Slang.* **tough; loafer****cornet, n.**

Brass musical instrument and a conical wafer to hold ice cream.

**cone****corporation, n.**

The American *corporation* has its equivalent in the British *company*. The British *corporation* is generally understood to be a *municipal corporation*. Thus, a *corporation swimming-bath* would be a *municipal* or *public swimming pool* in America, a *corporation car park* would be a *municipal parking lot*, etc. Of late, the British have begun to use *corporation* in the American sense, especially in tax terminology.

**municipality****corrector, n.**

Short for *corrector of the press*.

**proofreader****corridor, n.**

Referring to railroad cars etc. See **aisle**.

**aisle****corrie, n.**

Scottish.

**mountainside hollow****cos lettuce, n.**

See also **web lettuce**.

**romaine****cosh, n., v.t.**

*Slang.* A *cosh* is a *blackjack*. To be *coshed* is to be *hit on the head*, whether with a blackjack or some other unpleasant weapon. *Coshed* would find its American equivalent in *mugged*.

**blackjack****costermonger, n.**

Sometimes shortened to *coster*. His pushcart is known in Britain as a **trolley** or **barrow**. See also **pearly; fruiterer; greengrocer's**.

**fruit and vegetable pushcart vendor****costings, n. pl.**

A business term used in arriving at the price to be charged for a product.

**costs**

**cost the earth.** See **pay the earth; come expensive**.

**costume, n.**

This is somewhat old-fashioned and non-U, but still frequently heard, especially in dry cleaning establishments. With most Britons, *suit* applies to both sexes.

**lady's suit**

**costume, bathing.** See **bathing costume; swimming costume**.

**cot, n.**

See also **camp bed**.

**crib**

**cotton, n.****thread**

In the sense of 'sewing thread.' And cotton is not wound on *spools* in Britain but on *reels*.

**cotton wool****absorbent cotton**

For metaphorical uses, see **live in cotton wool**; **wrap in cotton wool**.

**council, n.***approx.* **town**

Literally, a local administrative body of a village, town, borough, city, county, etc. But the word is used, particularly in the country, exactly as Americans use *town*, in the sense that it is the *council* to which you apply where there is a problem about schools, sewage, roads, and the like.

**council house****municipal or public housing unit**

So-called because the government agency regulating housing is known as a *council*, whether *district council*, *county council*, or other. The rent in *council houses* is extremely low. A multi-family unit of this sort in America is called, generically, a *public housing project*. The equivalent in Britain would be a *council house estate* or *council housing estate*.

**councillor, n.****councilman**

A member of a *council* (e.g., a district council, county council, local administrative bodies) is a *councillor*.

**council school****public school**

The *council school* in Britain is the government-operated facility that Americans call *public school*. **Public schools** in Britain are what Americans call *prep schools* or *private schools*. See also **Common Entrance Examination**.

**counsel.** See **barrister**.

**counterfoil, n.****stub**

Referring to checks and checkbooks; also to the part of a bill one detaches and keeps.

**counter-jumper, n.****salesperson**

*Slang.* No American slang for this contemptuous term. A counter-jumper presumably had to jump over a counter to go to other parts of his crowded shop.

**count out the house****adjourn Parliament**

When fewer than a quorum of forty **Members** are present in the House of **Commons**.

**country round****day's route**

Referring to a delivery route (see **roundsman**) or round of professional visits.

**county, adj., n.***approx.* **quality**

*Inf.* This word has no exact equivalent in America. It has the connotation of good breeding and activity in local affairs like riding to hounds and opening flower shows. Such a person is *county*, i.e., a member of the local gentry, and it is hard to say whether *county* in such cases is an adjective or a noun. Never applied to a city dweller.

**courgette, n.** **zucchini**  
*Courge* is French for *gourd* or *squash*. *Courgette* is the diminutive. See also **marrow**.

**court, n.** *approx.* **campus**  
 Cambridge University term, also given as *courtyard*, for an area bounded by college buildings. The Oxford equivalent is **quad** (for *quadrangle*).

**court-card** **king, queen, or jack**  
 Referring to playing cards.

**court of inquiry** **fact-finding board**  
 A military term.

**court shoe** **pump**  
 Woman's light shoe with a low-cut upper.

**cove, n.** *Slang.* **guy; fellow**  
*Slang*. See also **chap**.

**Coventry, send to.** See **send to Coventry**.

**cover, n.** **coverage**  
 An insurance term, indicating the aggregate risks covered by a particular policy.

**cowboy, n.** SEE COMMENT  
*Slang*. Term applied to an itinerant self-employed workman (e.g., builder, roofer, electrician) who undercuts a skilled man and does a job of awe-inspiring incompetence. *Don't let him anywhere near your roof—he's just a cowboy!* In America, the term *cowboy* is applied to a reckless driver.

**cracker, n.** **snapper**  
 The kind served at children's parties. The use of the word in the American sense is creeping in, but the British generally call *crackers* **biscuits**. See under **biscuits**.

**crackers, adj.** *Slang.* **cracked; nuts**  
*Slang*. Predicate adjective only: *I think they all are going crackers*. See synonyms under **bonkers**.

**cracking, adj. & adv.** *Slang.* **full of pep**  
*Slang*. *Get cracking!* means *Get busy! Get going! Get moving! Get to work!*

**crammer's, n.** **cram school**

**cram on** **step on**  
*Slang*. To *cram on* the brakes is to step hard on them.

**cramp, n.** **clamp**  
 A portable tool for pressing things like planks together, or a metal bar to hold masonry together. The British use *clamp* as well.

**cranky, adj.** **eccentric**  
 The usual meaning in America is 'irritable,' 'ill-tempered.' The British usage reflects the noun *crank* in the sense of 'eccentric person,' a meaning common to both countries.

**crash, n.****1. collision****2. wreck**

The British tend to use *crash* to describe both cause and result. *Crash repairs* means automobile 'body work.' *Crash barrier* is the *center guard rail* on express highways, synonymous with **centre strip**, **central reserve**, etc.

**crawl, v.i.***Inf.* **cruise**

*Inf.* Of taxis. See also **gutter crawl**.

**crazy pavement.** See **pavement**.

**cream, clotted.** See **Devonshire cream**.

**cream off****take the best (people) out of**

*Inf.* *Skim* the top talent off a group. For example, the police complained it was official policy to *cream off* the best talent on the force and put them into administrative jobs, rather than keep them on the regular force to train and set examples for new recruits.

**creamed potatoes****mashed potatoes****cream tea**

SEE COMMENT

Afternoon tea with *Devonshire cream*, which is rich, sweet, delicious, thicker than American whipped cream, and is meant to be piled on top of the jam on top of the scones, creating in all likelihood a dish with more calories than any other substance known to man. See also **high tea**.

**crease, n.***approx.* **foul line**

As a sports term, the crease is the line behind which a player must stand in the game of *bowls*, as well as the line which defines the position of both bowler and batsman in cricket. In American *ice hockey* the crease has a comparable function.

**creased, adj.***Slang.* **tuckered out**

*Slang.* See also **clapped out**.

**crèche, n.****day nursery**

(First *e* usually sounds like AY; sometimes like EH.) Used occasionally in America to describe the traditional nativity scene.

**credit slip****deposit slip**

A banking term.

**creek, n.****inlet**

In Britain a *creek* usually means an 'inlet on a seacoast' or a 'small harbor.' Its secondary British meaning is the same as its principal American meaning: a 'small stream,' or 'minor tributary of a river.'

**creepy-crawly, n.****insect**

*Slang.* Most often, a spider; but used the way Americans use *slug*, to describe a disgusting person, the kind that seems to have *crawled* out from under a rock, and gives you the *creeps*.

**crib, n.***Slang.* **pony; trot**

*Slang.* A verbatim translation used by students in violation of school rules. This word is also used in America. *Pony* and *trot* do not appear in this connotation in Britain. The verb *crib* is heard in British and American schools.

**cricket, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Britain's national sport, with vital social overtones and symbolism. Thus, *not cricket* means 'unfair' or 'ungentlemanly,' and *It isn't cricket* must be familiar to millions outside Britain who haven't the slightest acquaintance with the game, so that the very word *cricket* has built into it the strongest implication of fair play.

**Crikey!, interj., Slang.***Slang.* **Good heavens!****crinkle-crinkle, adj.****winding**

*Inf.* A rare adjective used to describe serpentine red brick garden walls, full of twists and turns.

**crisps, n. pl.****potato chips**

*Crisps* (short for *potato crisps*) are called *potato chips* in America. The British shorten *potato crisps* to *crisps*. British *chips* are *French fried potatoes* in America. The Americans often shorten *French fried potatoes* to *French fries*. See also **chips; fish 'n' chips**.

**crit, n.****review**

*Inf.* For *criticism*.

**crock, n.***Inf.* **wreck**

*Inf.* Often used in the expression *a bit of a crock*, meaning a 'chronically ailing person,' not necessarily a hypochondriac. To *crock up* is British slang for 'break down' and *crooked* means 'broken down,' i.e., 'disabled,' rather than *drunk*, which is its special American slang meaning.

**crocodile, n.****line of schoolchildren**

*Inf.* Always led or followed (or both) by a teacher or teachers.

**croft, n.****small landholding**

A *crofter* is one who rents a *croft*.

**cross bench, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A *bench*, in Parliament, for independent members who vote with neither the government nor the opposition. See also **front bench; back bench**.

**crossroads, n.****intersection**

This word is used in America to mean the *intersection* of roads, but is more apt to be used figuratively in the sense of a 'dilemma urgently requiring decisions.' It would not be used in America referring to a street *intersection* in a city, and in the country Americans would use *crossroad* or *intersection*, or, in deep rural areas, *four corners*.

**cross-talk comedians****comedy team**

One meaning of cross-talk is repartee.

**crotchet, n.**Musical term. See **Appendix II.F**.**quarter note****crown, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Five **shillings**, but there was no crown coin or bill in general circulation even before the decimalization of the currency.**crown stroller, Slang****Slang. road hog**

The crown being the high center of a road.

**crow to pick****Inf. bone to pick****Inf.** A disagreeable subject to bring up. Also a fault to find. The British *pick bones* as well.**crumb, n.****inside of loaf**

The part of a loaf of bread that is not crust; the soft inner part.

**crumpet, n.**

1. SEE COMMENT

2. **Slang. nut (head)**3. **Slang. dish (desirable woman)**1. There are no *English muffins* in Britain, toasted or otherwise. In Britain the *muffin* is a light, flat, round, spongy cake which is toasted and buttered. In America a *muffin* is a quick bread made of batter, baked in a cup-shaped pan, which does not have to be toasted. The nearest thing to a British *crumpet* is what Americans call an *English muffin*.2. **Slang.** A *crumpet* means a 'head,' for which American slang supplies *nut*, *bean*, *noodle*, etc. It is used in Britain especially in *barmy on the crumpet*, meaning 'crazy in the head.' See also **loaf**. This use may be obsolete.3. A *nice bit of crumpet* is the usual phrase. See **bit of fluff**. This usage is vulgar. In a sentence like *Getting any crumpet?* *crumpet* is a euphemism. The equivalent American question normally omits the object of the verb: *Getting much lately?***crutch, n.****crotch****cry off****call off**

In the sense of 'discontinue'.

**cry stinking fish****deprecate oneself****Slang.** The verb *to cry* has the little used meaning, in both Britain and America, of "announce for sale," and in both countries, to *cry* (something) *up* is to *praise* or *extol* it. To *cry up one's wares*, then, is to *boast about one's products*. To *cry stinking fish* is to call attention to one's failures (literally, to *condemn one's own products*), which would appear to be a study in masochism, like sucking on a sore tooth.**C3****approx. Inf. 4-F; unfit****Inf.** A term of population classification, designating the class composed of the mentally or physically deficient. The technical term has developed the connotation of *unfit* or even *worthless*. Perhaps the closest equivalent is the former American Selective Service (draft) classification 4-F.**cubby, n.****cubbyhole**Often expanded to *cubby-hole* (in America a general term for any little nook where one stuffs odds and ends), but not much heard any more except among quite

senior citizens and among pre-school children, who keep their belongings in *cubbies*. The American term is heard as well in Britain.

**cuckoopint**, *n.*, *Inf.*

A wild flower.

*Inf.* **jack-in-the-pulpit**

**cufuffle**, *n.* See **kerfuffle**.

**cul-de-sac**, *n.*

**dead-end street**

*Cul-de-sac* and *blind road* are British terms for what in America would be called a *dead-end street*, at the entrance of which there is often placed a sign saying DEAD-END STREET OR NO THROUGH ROAD. See also **close**.

**cully**, *n.* *Slang.*

Companion.

*Inf.* **pal**

**cupboard**, *n.*

**closet**

See **closet** for British meaning.

**cupboard love**

*Slang.* **sucking up**

*Inf.* Describes the activity of a person trying to curry favor, with the strong implication of insincerity and self gain.

**Cup Final**

SEE COMMENT

Generally, the final match in any competition awarding a cup. It is usually understood to refer to **football** (*soccer*). See **up for the Cup**.

**cuppa**, *n.*

**cup of tea**

*Slang.* No American slang equivalent. Often used in expressions like *He's not my cuppa*, meaning 'He's not my kind of person.' See also **char**, 2.

**curate**, *n.*

**vicar's assistant**

**curate's assistant**, *Inf.*

**muffin stand**

**curate's egg**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Something both good and bad. This curious phrase originated from a *Punch* cartoon that appeared in 1895. A humble curate is breakfasting with his bishop, overawed by the very presence of that dignitary, and the caption reads:

"I'm afraid you've got a bad egg, Mr. Jones."

"Oh, no, my Lord, I assure you! Parts of it are excellent."

**curlies**, *n. pl.*

*Vulgar.* **short hairs**

*Vulgar.* To have someone by the *short and curlies* is to have him at a considerable disadvantage, as for example by the pubic hairs.

**curling tongs**

**curling iron**

**curly**, *adj.*

**gruesome**

*Slang.* A brutal murder might be spoken of as *curly*. A reflection of this use may be found in the following American usage: *It would make your hair curl*.

**current account**

Synonymous with **running account**. Cf. **deposit account**.

**checking account****curse of Scotland**

*Inf.* Various apocryphal derivations have been suggested, all of them fun.

**nine of diamonds****custard, n.**

A word of explanation: In America, *custard* is a sweetened mixture of milk and beaten eggs, baked until set, and served as a dessert (**pudding**; see also **dessert**; **sweet**; **afters**), with or without a sauce of one sort or another. In Britain, it can mean that too, but normally refers to the same mixture in running liquid form, thicker or thinner, done in a double boiler (**double saucepan**), served as a sauce over pies, compote, and the like.

**custard sauce****custom, n.**

Commonly used in Britain where Americans would say *business* or *customers*, as in: *An attractive shop-front (see **shop**) will bring in custom.* See also **trade**.

**business****cut, adj. Slang****Slang. tipsy****cut along, Inf.****Inf. run along****cut (a long story short), Inf.****Inf. make (a long story short)****cut away!**

*Slang.* See synonyms under **buzz off**.

**Slang. beat it!****cute, adj.**

In America, *cute* is generally applied to children, especially babies, or things like little girls' dresses, and means 'pretty, dainty, attractive.' In Britain, one speaks of a *cute* maneuver, or describes a lawyer or businessman as *cute*, in the sense of 'shrewd, clever, ingenious.' The American sense is not used in Britain, but one does hear in America of a clever move or tactic described as 'cute,' often 'pretty cute,' usually with a note of admiration or even rueful envy.

**shrewd****cutlet, n.**

Butcher's term.

**chop****cut one's lucky, Slang.****Slang. take a powder****cutting, n.**

Meaning 'newspaper clipping.' One employs a *cutting service* in Britain, in America a *clipping bureau*. Sometimes the sense is clarified by amplifying the term to *press cutting*, and *press cutting agency* is synonymous with *cutting service*.

**clipping****cut-throat, n., Inf.****straight razor****cut up, adj.**

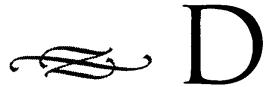
*Slang.* Wrought up, broken up, agitated, disturbed. Sometimes all cut up.

**upset**

**cut up for**

*Slang. How much did he cut up for?* is indelicate slang for 'How much of an estate did he leave?' This usage refers to a decedent's estate.

**leave (as an estate)****cut up rough** *Slang.***make a fuss (row)**

**dab, n.****Inf. whiz**

*Inf.* Used in the expression to *be a dab at*, sometimes lengthened to *be a dab hand at*, meaning to 'be especially adept at.'

**dabbly, adj.****wet**

*Slang.* A *dabbly* summer is one with frequent rain. Most people think that *dabble* is used only in the expression to *dabble in*, i.e., 'engage in superficially,' as to *dabble* in the market or in a hobby. But its primary meaning is to 'moisten intermittently'—hence a *dabbly* summer.

**dab in the hand, Slang.****bribe****dabs, n. pl., Inf.****fingerprints**

And the singular **dab** means 'fingerprint.'

**daddy-longlegs, n.****crane fly**

In Britain, a *daddy-longlegs* is a *crane-fly*, an insect of the family *Tipulidae* of the order *Diptera*, resembling an enormous mosquito and popularly called the *mosquito hawk*. In America called also '*harvestman*,' but not identical with the British insect.

**daggerplate. See sliding keel.****daily woman****cleaning woman**

*Inf.* Often shortened to just *daily*. Sometimes *daily help*. See also **char, 1**.

**dainty, adj.****Inf. picky; finicky**

*Inf.* About food; a term applied to young children who are hard to please at meal-time. See also **faddy**.

**Dame, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A woman who is knighted becomes a *Dame*. A *Dame* should not be confused with a *Lady*. See also **Lord** for other titles.

**damn all****Slang. nothing at all**

*Slang.* This expression is in fairly wide use and would not be considered improper in normal company, even mixed. Americans might hesitate for a moment before saying, I can't find a *damned thing*. The British would say, "I've got damn all."

**damp course****insulating layer**

A *damp course* or *damp-proof course* is a layer of tarred felt, slate, etc., placed above the house foundation to prevent deterioration in the walls of a building caused by *rising damp*, a troublesome phenomenon in Britain.

**dampers, n. pl.****flat cakes**

*Slang.* Made of flour and water, usually by Boy Scouts, and not recommended for gourmets. *Damper* is used as well in the various senses in which it is used in America in connection with fireplaces, pianos, etc., and figuratively in the sense of a 'wet blanket.'

**damp squib***Slang.* **bust; dud; lead balloon**

*Inf.* One of those things, like a Church Bazaar or a Charity Ball that was going to be a howling success, but. . . A squib literally is a firework, giving us all we need to understand 'damp squib.'

**darbies, n. pl.***Slang.* **bracelets**

*Slang. Handcuffs.* The British term is said to be derived from the expression *Father Darby's bands* or *bonds*, a particularly rigid form of debtor's bond invoked by usurers in the good old days.

**Darby and Joan**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* This sentimental nickname for any loving couple of advanced years is supposed to have originated from an allusion in a ballad that appeared in 1735 in a publication called *Gentleman's Magazine*. The poem, entitled "The Joys of Love Never Forgot," went:

Old Darby, with Joan by his side,  
You've often regarded with wonder.  
He's dropsical, she's sore-eyed,  
Yet they're never happy asunder.

Membership in Darby and Joan Clubs all over Britain is open to those whom Americans so tactfully call *Senior Citizens* and *Golden Agers* and the British *Old Age Pensioners*, usually shortened to O.A.P.s.

**dashed, adv.***Slang.* **damned**

*Slang.* Milder than *damned* in expressions like *dashed good*, *dashed bad*, and the like. Also heard in *Well, I'm dashed*, where Americans would say, *Well, I'll be damned!* *Dashed* may be on the way out as language becomes freer in a more permissive society.

**daughter concern****subsidiary**

A company owned by another company. The family relationship of the subsidiary is recognized in the American expression *parent company*, but the Americans keep the sex of the subsidiary a secret.

**davenport, n.****writing table; escritoire**

In America this word means 'large sofa.'

**daylight robbery***Inf.* **highway robbery**

*Inf.* Figure of speech, like *holdup*, meaning 'unashamed swindling,' an 'exorbitant price or fee.'

**day return.** See **return.**

**day sister.** See **sister.**

**day tripper.** See **tripper.**

**dead-alive**, *adj.**Inf.* **dead**; more dead than alive*Inf.* Sometimes *dead-and-alive*. Of a person, 'unspirited'; of work or a place, 'monotonous, boring.'**dead cert***Inf.* **sure thing***Slang.* *Cert* is short for *certainty*.**dead keen on.** See **keen on**; **mad on**.**dead man's shoes**

SEE COMMENT

This rather grim phrase describes something that somebody is waiting to inherit or succeed to, for example, his boss's job.

**dead on***Slang.* **on the nose***Inf.* Exactly right. See **bang on** for synonyms.**dead set at.** See **make a dead set at**.**dead slow****extremely slow**Often seen on traffic signs meaning *as slow as possible*. In both countries, ship-board signal from bridge to engine room.**dead stock****farm machinery**The term *dead stock* is occasionally used to mean 'unemployed capital' or 'unsalable merchandise.' However, it has a special use in connection with the sale of country property. One sees signs advertising an auction of such and such a farm property, sometimes with *livestock* and sometimes including *dead stock*. Undoubtedly, an echo of the common term *livestock*.**dead to the wide.** See **to the wide**.**deaf-aid****hearing aid****deals**, *n. pl.***lumber**For British meaning of *lumber*, see **lumber**, *n.***dean**, *n.***cathedral head**See under **head**, 1.**death duties****inheritance tax**

The estate tax levied on property after the owner's death.

**debag**, *v.t.**Inf.* **cut down to size***Slang.* Literally, *debag* means to 'pull somebody's pants off,' **bags** being slang for 'pants,' or as the British say, *trousers*. Figuratively, it means to 'deflate' a person.**debus**, *v.t., v.i.***get out of an automobile**(Accent on second syllable: DEE-BUS, EM-BUS.) *Embus* is to *get in*. Cf. *detrain* and *entrain*. Military terms. Also applied to unloading ammunition etc. from a vehicle.**decasualization**

SEE COMMENT

Increasing the number of so-called permanent jobs in a nation's economy, perhaps by abolishing casual labor. See **casual labourer**.

**decillion.** See **Appendix II.D.**

**decoke, v.t.**

To *do a ring job* on a car.

**decarbonize**

**decorate, v.t.**

**paint**

In context, *decorating* a room or a house means 'painting' it, and *house painters* are sometimes referred to as *decorators*. The word has nothing to do with *decoration* in its general sense, nor with interior decorating.

**deed-poll, n.**

**unilateral deed**

A legal term describing a document signed by a single party. *Poll* is an old verb meaning to 'cut evenly,' as for instance, the edge of a sheet. A *deed-poll* is written on a *polled* sheet, one that is cut evenly and not indented. The common use of a *deed-poll* nowadays is as a document by virtue of which one changes one's name.

**degree day**

**commencement**

This is a university term and has nothing to do with weather measurements, as in America.

**degree of frost**

**degree below 32°F**

In America, 20°F is 20° *above zero*, or simply 20 *above*, or even more simply, 20. In Britain, 20°F is announced as 12° *of frost*. Formula: X° of frost in Britain = (32 - X)° above 0 in America.

**dekko, n., Slang.**

**Slang. gander (glance)**

A look: *She asked to have a quick dekho.*

**demarcation dispute**

**jurisdictional dispute**

Between unions, or between different departments in a company. At risk is the work available.

**demerara, n.**

SEE COMMENT

(Rhymes with SAHARA.) Raw cane sugar, light brown, frequently served with coffee. Imported from Demerara, in Guyana. See also **coffee sugar**.

**demisemiquaver, n.**

**thirty-second note**

Musical term. See **Appendix II.F.**

**demister, n.**

**defroster**

Automotive term. See **Appendix II.E.**

**demo, n.**

**demonstration**

*Inf.* A *street demonstration*, or a *demonstration* of something the demonstrator wants you to buy. In the U.S., a sample recording by a musician.

**demob, v.t.**

**discharge**

*Inf.* (Accent on the second syllable.) Short for *demobilize* and *demobilization*. A military term. See **bowler-hatted**.

**demonstrator, n.**

**laboratory assistant**

At an academic institution.

dene, *n.*

1. sandy stretch by the sea
2. dune
3. wooded vale

denominational school

parochial school

denture, *n.*

removable bridge

A denture, in America, is usually understood to denote a set of upper or lower false teeth. It is used that way in Britain, too, but the term is also used for any removable bridge, whether one or more teeth are involved. *Bridge* means 'fixed bridge' only. Dentures, in the American sense, are occasionally referred to in Britain, especially by older people, as *dentacles* or *dentials*.

departmental store

department store

deposit account

savings account

Cf. current account, running account.

de-restricted road

road without speed limit

For many years there were no speed limits on British country roads. Now the government has imposed an overall speed limit of 70 m.p.h. However, as one approaches a city, town, or village there are signs reading "30" or "40" restricting the driver to those limits while passing through those areas. Once beyond the geographical limits, you find a de-restriction sign, which means that you are back on the overall speed limit of 70 m.p.h.

dessert, *n.*

fruit course at end of meal

In Britain *dessert* is a fresh fruit course (sometimes also nuts and/or trifling sweetmeats) served at the end of a meal either after, or in place of, what the British call a *sweet*. British *dessert* can be any fresh fruit. *Dessert* in America is a generic term for the last course of the meal whether it consists of fruit, pudding, ice cream, or whatever. In spite of the aforementioned restricted use of *dessert* in Britain, the British use *dessert plates*, *dessert knives*, *dessert forks*, and *dessert spoons*.

destructor, *n.*

incinerator

detached house. See semi-detached; terrace.

deta in, *v.t.*

1. arrest
2. keep

1. Often used in this sense in America. *Three men were deta in in connection with the shooting of a policeman. A man was deta in after a raid on a bank.* See also **assist-ing the police**.

2. Used commonly about people *kept* in the hospital after an accident, as opposed to those whose injuries were superficial. In American you would be *kept in the hospital*; in Britain you would be *deta in in hospital* (no article). See also **Appendix I.A.2**.

**detained during the Queen's (King's) pleasure****sentenced to an indeterminate term**

Sometimes, *during His/Her Majesty's pleasure*. Predictably, there is the story of the woman so sentenced during the reign of a male monarch: "I thought I was too old for that sort of thing."

**developer, n.****real-estate developer**

Used by itself, in Britain and in America, the term describes a person engaged in the purchase of land and the erection of buildings on it. It sometimes appears in the phrase *property developer*. In both countries *developer* also means 'photographic developing solution.'

**development area**

SEE COMMENT

An area suffering from temporary or intermittent severe unemployment.

**devil, n., v.i.****1. law apprentice****2. literary hack**

Americans may be familiar with the old-fashioned term *printer's devil* meaning 'printer's errand boy' or 'junior apprentice.' In Britain *devil* has two additional meanings.

1. Assistant to junior legal counsel in the **chambers** of a **leader**.

2. *Hack*, or *ghostwriter*. To *devil* is to act in either of these lowly capacities, often underpaid in the literary field, and not only unpaid, but a privilege usually paid for, in the legal field.

**devil on horseback****prune wrapped in bacon**

One of many different types of **savoury**, served on a small piece of toast. Sometimes an oyster replaces the prune. See also **angel on horseback**.

**devilry, n****black magic**

The British say *devilry* as well to refer to this diabolical art.

**devolution, n.****home rule**

(The *e* is long in British English, short in American.) Governmental decentralization. A term that has lately come into vogue in political discussion. A devolutionist is one who urges decentralization of government.

**Devonshire cream (clotted cream)**

SEE COMMENT

Clotted cream is made by scalding milk and skimming off what rises to the top. For one of its delicious applications, see **cream tea**. Incidentally, *clotted* is derived from the *clot* or *clout* (cloth) with which the cream is covered during the process, and does not refer to the consistency of the cream.

**dewar****thermos bottle**

Sir James Dewar was a British physicist who invented the 'dewar' or 'Dewar vessel,' a double-walled glass container with the air between the walls exhausted to prevent conduction of heat in either direction. Rarely heard nowadays.

**dhobied, adj.****washed**

*Inf.* From *dhobi*, meaning 'washing.' Usage restricted to retired India hands.

**diamond jubilee**

SEE COMMENT

The usual meaning in Britain is 'sixtieth anniversary,' though it occasionally means 'seventy-fifth,' as in America.

**dibs**, *n.*, *Slang*.

**Lolly** is more usual. See **brass**.

*Slang*. **dough** (money)

**dicey**, *adj*.

*Slang*. A term based on the figurative aspect of the throw of the dice. Applied to the weather in the perennial British problem of whether or not to plan a picnic and similar games of chance. A somewhat less common British slang equivalent is **dodgy**.

**touch and go**

**dickey**, *n*.

*Slang*. Also given as *dicky*. This was the familiar name in the old days for the servant's seat in the rear of a carriage.

**rumble seat**

**dicky**, *adj.*, *Slang*.

*Inf*. **shaky**

**diddle**, *v.t*.

*Slang*. In the sense of 'fleece' or 'gouge,' i.e., to 'do somebody out of something.'

*Slang*. **screw**

**digestive biscuits**

SEE COMMENT

Somewhat close to Graham crackers, and very tasty. Sometimes shortened to *digestives*. See also **Bath Oliver**.

**digs**, *n. pl*.

*Inf*. Short for *diggings*. A Briton speaks of his *digs* in the way an American speaks of his *place*, or, these days, his *pad*. Mostly actors' and students' terminology. See **drum**.

**place** (rooms; lodging)

**dim**, *adj*.

*Slang*. Short for *dim-witted*. See also as **dim as a Toc H lamp**.

*Slang*. **thick; thickheaded**

**ding-dong**, *n.*, *Slang*.

**1. heated argument**

**2. noisy party**

**dingle**, *n*.

Sometimes combined as *dingle-dell*. Usually a deep hollow, shaded with trees.

**dell**

**dinky**, *adj*.

*Inf*. This word is the equivalent of the American term *cute* or *cunning* in the sense of 'sweet' or 'adorable,' not in the sense of 'sly.' The word *dinky* in America has the pejorative meaning of 'ramshackle' and is more or less synonymous with the American slang term *cheesy* which, however, in Britain can mean 'swanky.'

**pretty; dainty**

**dinner-jacket**, *n*.

Americans say *dinner jacket* too, but *tuxedo* is never used in British English.

**tuxedo**

**diplomatist**, *n*.

The shorter form is almost universal nowadays.

**diplomat**

**directly**, *conj*.

*Immediately after*: *Directly he left the room, she began to talk freely.*

**as soon as**

**director**, *n*.

To the British layman *director* means about the same thing in the context of business epithets as *executive* would mean to an American layman. Directorships in

*approx.* **executive**

British companies and American corporations (see **chairman; company; managing director**) amount roughly to the same thing, although their duties and prerogatives (as a matter of law) and their functions differ in some respects in the two systems. In both countries important personages are frequently elected to membership on boards of directors as window-dressing and don't participate actively in the affairs of the company. But the general connotation of *director* in Britain is that of an 'operating executive' whose American opposite would be the company's *vice-president-in-charge-of-something-or-other*.

**directory enquiries.** See **enquiries**.

**dirty week-end**

**illicit weekend**

*Inf.* A few days spent with one's lover, with the implications of all those circum-spect arrangements.

**dish, n.**

**serving dish; platter**

Although both countries use *dishes* generically, *dish* in Britain usually has the narrower meaning of 'serving dish' and *platter* is considered archaic.

**dished, v.t.**

*Inf.* **cheated**

*Inf.* Often carrying the meaning of 'defeated through illicit means.'

**dish-washer.** See **wash up**.

**dishy, adj.**

*Slang.* **very attractive**

*Slang.* Usually applied to people, but also to inanimate objects, such as sports cars.

**dismal Jimmy, Slang.**

*Slang.* **gloomy Gus**

A person eager always to see the negative side of anything, no matter how positive.

**dismiss, v.t.**

**put (someone) out; get (someone) out**

Cricket term. One doesn't *get* or *put* the **batsman** (*batter*) *out*. He (and when he is last in the batting order, his side) is said to be *dismissed* when he is run out, caught, etc.

**dismissal with disgrace**

**dishonorable discharge**

A term applied to noncommissioned soldiers and sailors alike. A naval officer would be *dismissed with ignominy*, an army officer *cashiered*.

**dispatch, n.**

**mailing and handling**

As in *Price £1 + 40p. for dispatch*. Cf. **posting (postage) and packing**.

**dispensary.** See **dispenser**.

**dispenser, n.**

In America a *dispenser* usually means a container that feeds out some substance in convenient units, or a *vending machine*. The British use the word *dispenser* that way, too, but primarily it means in Britain what Americans would call a *pharmacist*, a person in the profession of making up medical prescriptions. *Dispensing Chemist* is a sign commonly seen on the store front of a British drugstore (**chemist's shop**). The related word *dispensary* means the 'drug department' of a drugstore, hospital or doctor's office (**surgery**).

**dissenter, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A member of a Protestant sect that has split off from the established church, i.e., the Church of England. See also **chapel**.

**distemper, n.****canine distemper**

A common and fatal infectious disease of cats and dogs.

**divan, n.****sofa; couch**

*Divan* is not nearly so frequent in America as in Britain, where it is preferred to *sofa*: *couch* is rarely used in this connection by the British.

**diversion, n.****detour**

A traffic term. All too frequently one sees a road sign reading **DIVERSION** leading one away from the main road and only sometimes back onto it.

**divi; divvy, n.****dividend**

*Slang*. Short for *dividend*, especially that distributed periodically. As used in Britain, *dividend*, which in America applies only to shares of stock, can refer as well to bond interest.

**division, n.**

1. SEE COMMENT

2. SEE COMMENT

1. Area represented by a Member of Parliament: corresponds to *Congressional District* (see **constituency; Member**).

2. A term used in sentencing convicted criminals. Preceded by *first*, *second*, or *third*, it means 'lenient,' 'medium,' or 'severe' treatment in prison, as prescribed by the sentencing judge.

**divvy**. See **divi**.

**D-notice***approx.* **press publication restriction**

Notice given by the *D-notices Committee*, representatives of government and press, to newspapers, requesting them to omit mention of material that might endanger national defense. The *D* stands for *defence*. A wartime institution, now obsolete.

**do, n.**1. **deal**2. **swindle**3. **ruckus**

1. *Quite a do*—a wedding, for instance—would more likely be *quite a deal*, or a *big deal*, in America.

2. The nasty transaction by which one is *done*.

3. Americans would be likely to say *ruckus* or *hoax*.

**do, v.t.****offer**

In America a shop does or doesn't *have*, *sell*, *keep*, *stock*, or *make* a particular item. The British often substitute *do* in those cases. A stationer may *do* daily newspapers but not the Sunday edition. An upholsterer may *do* hangings but not slip-covers (which he would call **loose covers**). A certain restaurant will be recommended because, though their soups are indifferent, they *do* a good mixed grill.

**do bird**Slang. **serve time**

Slang. In prison. *Bird* here is short for *birdlime* (the sticky stuff people spread on twigs to catch birds) which is cockney rhyming slang for *time*. See **Appendix II.G.3**.

**do (someone) brown**Slang. **take (someone) in**

Slang. To fool someone, to pull the wool over his eyes.

**dock, n.****1. basin****2. SEE COMMENT**

1. The British use *dock* to denote the water between what Americans call *docks* and the British call *wharves*. But note the expression *dry dock* which means the same thing in both countries.

2. A prisoners' detention area in the courtroom. In the dock means 'on trial.'

**dock brief.** See **brief; dock**.

**docker, n.****longshoreman****docket, n.****judgment roll**

In British legal parlance a *docket* is a register in which judgments are entered, but the term can be narrowed to mean an 'entry' in such a register. In America, also meaning a list of causes for trial or persons having causes pending.

**dockyard, n.****navy yard or shipyard****doctor, v.t.****castrate or spay**

Applied to animals of both sexes. Not in America. Both countries also use the verb *neuter*.

**doddle, n., Slang****cinch**

Anything easily accomplished. In a narrower sense, *doddle* can mean 'money easily obtained.'

**dodge, n.**Slang. **racket**

Slang. *That's my dodge*, meaning 'That's my racket,' can be used, somewhat impudently, to mean nothing more than 'That's the business I'm in.' More generally, a *dodge* is any *shrewd device* or *sly expedient*.

**dodge the column**Slang. **goof off**

Slang. To *shirk one's duty*. The British expression, taken from the military, may be thought to have a somewhat more elegant sound.

**dodgy, adj.****tricky**

Risky; doubtful; uncertain. See **dicey**.

**do (someone) down**Slang. **do (someone) dirt**

Synonymous with **do (someone) in the eye**.

**do for**

SEE COMMENT

Inf. No precise American colloquial equivalent. When a British housewife tells you that Mrs. Harris *does for* her, she means that Mrs. Harris is *acting as her housekeeper*, or is what the British call her *daily help* (see **char; daily woman**): *I will be*

*sure to do for my son.* Can be applied also to one's children and to outside helpers, like gardeners, handymen, and others performing similar functions.

**dog-end, n.**

**cigarette butt**

*Slang.* Vagrants' cant. See also **end**; **stump**.

**doggo.** See **lie doggo**.

**dog's body, n.**

*Slang.* **gofer**

*Slang.* This quaint term was originally British nautical slang. *Dog's body*, in that idiom, means a 'dish of dried peas boiled in a cloth.' For reasons apparently lost in history, it also means 'junior naval officer.' As a matter of obvious practical extension, it came to mean 'drudge,' hence an *errand boy* (in the slang sense) or in an even slangier sense a *prat boy*, or *gofer*. Also spelled *dog's-body* and *dogsboby*.

**dog's breakfast**

**unholy mess**

*Inf.* Unlike a *dog's dinner* (see **like a dog's dinner**).

**dog's dinner.** See **like a dog's dinner**.

**do (someone) in the eye**

*Slang.* **do (someone) dirt**

*Slang.* To play (someone) a dirty trick. Synonymous with **do (someone) down**.

**(the) dole, n.**

**unemployment benefits**

*Inf.* Common term, somewhat pejorative, for *unemployment compensation*. The equivalent of welfare and/or unemployment compensation under the British system, with its own rules, regulations, arithmetic, and heartbreaks.

**dollop, v.t.**

**1. serve in large quantities**

**2. cover with a large quantity**

*Inf.* From the noun *dollop*, meaning a *blob* of something. In meaning 1, it is usually found in the expression *dollop out*. In meaning 2, it is usually seen in the passive voice, as in *dolloped in mud*.

**domestic science**

**home economics**

The arts of cooking and sewing—the study of household management—are euphemized by the educational terminology of both countries.

**domiciliary, n.**

**house call**

Adjective used as a noun; short for *domiciliary visit*. Used especially by doctors to designate what has become a practically obsolete practice.

**don, n.**

*approx.* **college teacher**

A *don* (contraction of *dominus*, Latin for 'lord') is a *teacher*, whether a **Head** (*dean*), a **Fellow** (*assistant*), or tutor (*adviser*) at a **college**, primarily at Oxford and Cambridge, but also at other old universities like Edinburgh and Durham. The derivation from *dominus* is clearly seen in *dominie*, which is Scottish for 'schoolmaster.'

**(be) done**

*Slang.* **(be) had**

*Slang.* In the sense of taken advantage of, or even *cheated*. See **do, 2**.

100 done to the wide

done to the wide. See to the wide.

**donkey's years**

*Inf.* a dog's age

*Inf.* Both expressions mean 'a very long time,' although donkeys usually live longer than dogs. See also **moons**.

**donkey-work, n.**

**drudgery**

*Slang.* Like clearing the weeds under the hedges.

**Donnybrook, n.**

*Inf.* free-for-all

See under **Kilkenny cats**.

**doodle-bug, n.**

**flying bomb**

*Slang.* Hitler's V-1 rocket, the 'flying bomb' sent over southern England in World War II.

**doolally, adj.**

*Slang.* nuts

*Slang.* Deolali was a sanatorium in Bombay to which British soldiers were sent when their time of service expired, and where time hung heavily on their hands while waiting for a troopship to take them home. The boredom in the camp produced all sorts of peculiar behavior, for which the expression *the Doolally tap* was coined, *tap* being East Indian for 'fever.' See synonyms under **bonkers**.

**doom, n.**

**painting of the Last Judgment**

A *doom* may also be a sculptural group depicting the Final Day.

**doorstep salesman**

**door-to-door salesman**

Synonymous with **knocker**.

**do one's nut, Slang.**

*Slang.* 1. work like mad  
2. blow one's top

**do porridge**

*Slang.* serve time

*Slang.* In jail. Synonymous with **do bird**. See also **porridge**.

**DORA, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Acronym for *Defence of the Realm Acts*, passed in August 1914, giving the government wide powers during wartime. Between the wars, chiefly associated with pub opening hours. See **during hours**.

**dormitory, n.**

**commuting town**

Used by itself, but more commonly in the phrase *commuters' dormitory town*. The term *bedroom community* means the same thing, in America.

**Dorothy bag**

**tote bag**

**doss, have a.** See **have a doss**.

**dosser.** See **doss-house**.

**doss-house, n.**

*Doss* is British slang for a 'bed' in what Americans call a *flophouse*. *Doss house* is common to both languages, but it is hardly ever used in America. In British slang, the word *doss* is also a verb meaning to 'sleep in a flophouse' but, less specifically, to *doss down* is to 'go to bed,' usually in rough, makeshift circumstances. See also **casual ward**; **have a doss**.

**Slang. flophouse****dot and go one****Inf. gimpy**

*Inf.* A lame person who walks with a limp or drags a leg, based on the supposed rhythm of one walking with a wooden leg.

**dot, off his.** See **off one's dot**.

**dotty, adj.****Slang. loony**

*Slang.* See synonyms under **bonkers**.

**double, adj., n.****1. SEE COMMENT****2. SEE COMMENT****3. double portion****4. heavy; thick**

1. *Double* and *treble* are used in giving telephone numbers in Britain. Thus, Belgravia 2211 was Belgravia *double two double one*; Grosvenor 3111 was Grosvenor *three one double one* or *three treble one*.

2. In oral spelling, one always says *double* the letter (*double-b* for b-b, etc.) rather than repeat it.

3. A use of *double* is heard in the pub. If you ask for a whiskey you get what Americans would consider a smallish quantity and the proof is less as well. When you want a decent drink of whiskey you ask for a *double*. A common synonym of *double* in this sense is *large*. A *large* or *double* drink is twice a single portion, which is by law, in England, one-sixth of a gill, and a gill is one-fourth of a pint, which means that a single is one-twenty-fourth of a pint! (See **Appendix II.C.2.**)

4. And then there are *double (heavy)* and *single (light)* cream. See **double cream**.

**double-barrelled, adj.****hyphenated**

*Inf.* Referring to surnames, like Sackville-West.

**double-bedded, adj.****with a double bed**

When you reserve (**book**) a hotel room for two in Britain the clerk usually asks you whether you want a *double-bedded room* or a *twin-bedded room*. *Single-bedded room* is used to describe what is called a *single room* in America.

**double bend.** See **bend**.

**double blue.** See **blue, n.**

**double cream****heavy cream**

Very heavy cream, much thicker and richer than American heavy cream, which is called just plain *cream* in Britain.

**double Dutch****Inf. Greek**

*Inf.* Unintelligible gobbledygook, as in *It's all double Dutch to me!* In addition, *Double Dutch* is the name given to a complex form of jump rope, seen primarily in American city playgrounds.

**double figures**

*Inf.* But not over ninety-nine, where one gets into *treble figures*. *Double figures* is used commonly to indicate the attainment of a new plateau, as in *He's gone into double figures*, about a **batsman** (*batter*) in cricket who has broken nine, i.e., made his tenth run, or, *We've gone into double figures*, by someone who has just increased the staff from eight to eleven.

**double digits (ten or more)****double saucepan****double boiler****doughnut, n.****jelly doughnut**

With jam or cream inside, instead of a hole and sugar on the outside, like an American jelly doughnut. The regulation American doughnut is called *ring doughnut* in Britain.

**do (someone) up****do (someone) in**

*To exhaust, wear out: The long walk did us up.*

**do (someone) well, v.t.*****Inf.* treat (someone) right**

*Inf.* In the British phrase *they do you well*, referring, for example, to one's enjoyment of hospitality at a hotel, the *do* is equivalent to *treat* in America, but an American would be more likely to say *they treat you right*, or *they do all right by you*, or *they take good care of you*. To *do yourself well* means to 'live comfortably.'

**dowlas, n.****heavy linen or muslin****down, adv.**

## SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* From London; **up** means to London. A person living outside London might ask a friend, "How often do you go up?" and the meaning would be quite clear: "How often do you go to London?" *Come up* would be used if they were talking in London. *Go down* and *come down* would be used, depending on the vantage point of the speaker, to mean 'go' or 'come to the country,' i.e., to somewhere outside of London. But people living in Scotland or in the north of England may talk of *going down* (i.e., south) to London—to the confusion of southerners, the despair of geographers, and the discomfiture of certain northerners. See also **down train**.

**down, n.****dislike**

*Inf.* To *have a down on* someone means to 'be prejudiced' against him.

**down at heel*****Inf.* down at the heels**

*Inf.* Note singular of *heel*. See **Appendix I.A.2**.

**down-market, adj.****lower class**

*Inf.* But sometimes it means only 'lower priced.'

**downs, n. pl.****uplands**

An American asked a Briton what the *downs* were and the Briton answered: "The *downs* are the ups." They are, and the South Downs are the open rolling hills of southern England, which are usually dotted with cattle and sheep. *Downs* can be *ups* because the word is etymologically related to *dune* and has nothing to do with the direction *down*.

**down train**

## SEE COMMENT

*Train from London.* A train in Britain goes *up* to London even if it has to travel south (or east or west) to get there; and it goes *down* from London no matter what

direction it has to take to leave that fine city. Since there can be no more important end to a British railway trip than arrival in London, London must be the *up* end, and one therefore takes the *up train* to London no matter where one starts the journey. *Up* and *down* are not mere oral colloquialisms, but appear in printed timetables and are standard terms on station bulletin boards. However, it so happens that civic spirit has sought to apply the same rule to other large cities. Starting out from London, one would take the *down train* to Manchester, and even a Mancunian in London would not think of the train from London as the *up train*; but a patriotic denizen of Manchester might talk of any train *leaving* Manchester as a *down train*.

**downy**, *adj.*

*Inf.* **sharp**

*Slang.* A *downy card* is a *smart cookie*.

**doyen**, *n.*

**dean**

(Pronounced DOY'-EN, or as in French.) Indicating the senior member of the group, like the *doyen* of the diplomatic corps, the *doyen* of the London Bar. *Doyen* is rarely used in America; *dean* is sometimes used in Britain.

**dozy**; **dozey**, *adj.*

*Inf.* **dopey**

*Inf.* Slow witted, lazy.

**drain**, *n.*

*Slang.* **nip**

*Slang.* An undersized drink of something.

**drain**, *laugh like a*. See *laugh like a drain*.

**drains**, *n. pl.*

**plumbing**; **sewerage system**

The *drains* of the house are its *drain pipes*, or *plumbing and sewerage system*. When a real estate advertisement in Britain uses the term *main drainage*, the house is connected to a public sewer system.

**draper's shop**

**dry goods store**; **haberdashery**

The *shop* can be omitted, and the *draper's* can also mean a 'haberdashery,' in the American sense of 'men's shop.' But a British **haberdashery** would be called a *notions store* in America. See also **Manchester**; **fancy goods**; **haberdashery**; **soft furnishings**.

**draughts**, *n. pl.*

**checkers**

The famous board game.

**drawing office**

**drafting room**

**drawing-pin**, *n.*

**thumbtack**

Synonymous with **push-pin**.

**drawing-room**, *n.*

**living room**

*Living-room* and **sitting-room** are also used in Britain. **Lounge** is heard in hotels, on board ships, or in the expression *lounge bar*.

**draw it mild!**

**don't exaggerate!**

Term derived from *drawing* of beer, now widely applied as an expression encouraging conservatism.

**draw stumps.** See **up stumps**.

**draw the long bow**

*Inf.* Usually found in the expression *I'm not drawing the long bow*, where Americans might say, *I'm not kidding* or *I am not exaggerating*. *approx. lay it on thick*

**dreadful warning,** *Inf.*

**coming attractions**

**dress circle**

**first balcony**

Of a theater; also heard in America. *Balcony* is not used in this context in Britain, where the *dress circle* would be described as the 'first gallery' of a theater. The term *gallery*, in theater parlance, is restricted to the topmost balcony housing the cheapest seats, called the **gods** in Britain.

**dressed to the nines**

*Slang.* **all dolled up; dressed to kill**

*Inf.* Sometimes *dressed up to the nines*. Synonymous with (*got up*) **like a dog's dinner**. *To the nines* means 'to perfection.'

**dresser, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Kitchen sideboard with shelves. Americans use *dresser* principally to mean a 'bureau' or 'dressing table.'

**dressing gown**

**bathrobe; wrapper**

In America *dressing gown* refers to something a little fancier than *bathrobe*. *Bathrobe* is not used in Britain, where men and women have *dressing gowns*.

**dress show**

**fashion show**

**drill.** See **what's the drill?**

**drive, n.**

**driveway**

**drive a coach and horses through**

*Inf.* **knock holes in; flout**

*Inf.* Generally applied to Acts of Parliament that are ignored and made to appear useless.

**driver, n.**

**motorman**

British **trams** (tramways) and American trolleys (trolley cars) are both practically obsolete, but when they were in common use the man who operated them was known as a *driver* in Britain and a *motorman* in America. The same distinction exists today with respect to the **underground** or **tube** (*subway*). On a bus, however, he is the *driver* in both countries. On a British train, he is the **engine driver**; on an American train, the *engineer*.

**driving seat**

**driver's seat**

**drive (someone) up the wall**

*Slang.* **drive (someone) crazy**

*Slang.* *He (she) drives me up the wall* is commonly used in Britain and America.

**driving licence**

**driver's license**

**drop a brick**

*Slang.* **make a booboo**

*Slang.* In the special sense of committing an indiscretion.

**drop a clanger***Slang.* See also **put up a black; howler.****make a gaffe****drop down dead**

Makes an already final phenomenon even more final.

**drop dead****drop-head, *adj.*, *n.***Referring to automobiles. See also **Appendix II.E.****convertible top****drop off the hooks, *Slang.****Slang.* **kick the bucket****drop-scene, *n.***Sometimes *drop-curtain*. Theater talk. The British term covers not only an entire painted scene, but occasional scenery.**backdrop****dropsy, *n.****Slang.* Often with the implication of hush-money.**tip; bribe****dross, *n.***A mining term. A Scottish housewife will buy *dross* to use with household coal as an economy measure.**scrap coal****drug in the market**

Something nobody wants.

**drug on the market****drum, *n.****Slang.* Living quarter, brothel, night club.

SEE COMMENT

**dry martini. See martini.****D.S.O. See V.C.****dual carriageway**See also **centre strip.****divided highway****dubbin, *n.***A greasy preparation for softening leather and making it waterproof. Sometimes spelled *dubbing*. Popular with British and American soldiers.**leather dressing****duck, *n.*****1. approx. *Inf.* goose egg****2. approx. honey**

1. As a cricket term, to *get a duck* is to *be bowled* (*put out*, approximately) without scoring a single run. If this happens on the first ball bowled (first pitch, approximately), you get a *golden duck*. This type of *duck* is short for *duck's egg*.

2. *Inf.* *Duck* is used as a form of address traditionally by barmaids and frequently by purveyors of other types of merchandise, especially the older ladies of that group. It is used by females to persons of both sexes, but by males only to females. It is a term of extremely casual endearment, and in this use is synonymous with *love*, *lovey*, *dear*, *deary*, and *darling* as forms of address.

**dud cheque, *Slang.****Slang.* **bum check; rubber check**

**dues, n. pl.****fee(s)**

*Dues*, generally associated in America with the cost of membership in an organization, has the general meaning in Britain of *fee* or *charge* as in *postal dues* (*postage*), *university dues* (*tuition*), etc. Agents' commissions are also called *dues* in Britain.

**duff, v.t.****fake**

*Slang.* To *duff* merchandise is to make old stuff look new in order to fool the customer.

**duffer, n.****peddler of faked merchandise**

A *duffer* in Britain is a con man who, selling shoddy goods, claims them to be of great value because they were stolen or smuggled. It is sometimes used in Britain generically, to mean any *peddler* (spelled *pedlar* in Britain). In both countries it also commonly means a 'person inept at games.'

**duff gen.** See **gen.**

**dug-out, n.***Slang.* **old retread**

*Slang.* More specifically, retired officer taken back into military service.

**dull, adj.****gloomy**

A term used all too frequently in describing overcast weather.

**dumb-waiter, n.****lazy Susan**

An American *dumbwaiter*, a small elevator, is in Britain a **service lift**.

**dummy, n.****baby pacifier****dunnage, n.***Inf.* **duds; personal baggage**

*Inf.* More generally, *personal belongings*; one's *stuff*. *Dunnage*, in standard English, means the 'loose material packed around cargo' to prevent damage.

**during hours**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Pubs used to be open more or less at all hours, but during World War I they were forced to close during certain hours. This provision was included in **DORA**. The establishment of pub closing hours was deemed necessary to prevent workers from stopping at a pub for a quick one in the morning on the way to the munitions factory and somehow never getting there. *Time gentlemen, please!* means that the legal closing hour is at hand—or, more often, past.

**dust, n.****household refuse**

In addition to its more usual meaning in both countries.

**dustbin, n.****garbage can****dustcart, n.****garbage truck****dustman, n.****garbage man**

Upgraded to *refuse collector*, then to *sanitation officer*.

**dust road.** See **metalled road**.

**dust-up, n.**

*Slang.* Kick-up and punch-up are synonyms.

**brawl****dutch, n.**

*Slang.* Especially in *my old dutch*, a term of endearment, like *my old girl*, *my dear old better half*. Perhaps an abbreviation of *duchess*, with the *t* thrown in by reference to *Dutch*.

**wife****duvet, n.**

(Usually pronounced DEW'-VAY, but DOO-VAY' and DOO'-VET are also heard.) It differs from an **eiderdown** in that it has a removable washable cover, hangs over the sides of the bed, and is used as a complete bed covering without top sheet or blankets. It is also called *continental quilt* in Britain.

**eiderdown quilt****D.V., W.P.**

These initials stand for *Deo volente, weather permitting*. This is an old-fashioned British joke and reflects the Briton's firm belief that British weather is so uncertain that, when plans are being discussed, appeal should be made not only to the Almighty but to the elements as well. *Deo volente* is Latin for *God willing*.

*approx.* **God willing****dye stamp**

Stationery, for example. A term used in printing.

**engrave****dynamo, n.**

See **Appendix II.E.**

**generator**

In the U.S., *dynamo*, formerly much used, especially to describe a D.C. generator, is now rarely heard; an A.C. generator is now usually called an *alternator*, especially as an automotive part; a *generator* can be A.C. or D.C.



each way. *See have a quid each way.*

**eagre, eager, *n.***

**tidal flood**

**early closing**

SEE COMMENT

Just about every British village or town has an *early closing day*. This custom is observed in a few parts of America, but even in those towns there are often non-conforming individual holdouts, a practice rare in Britain. In the smaller British villages and towns, all the shops close for lunch, usually from 1:00 P.M. to 2:00 P.M. or 2:15 P.M. every day, but on *early closing day* they shut at 1:00. for good.

**early days**

**too soon; Slang. jumping the gun**

*Inf.* This phrase means *prematureness*. Thus: *It's early days to reach that conclusion.*

**early on**

**early in the picture**

This expression, meaning 'at an early stage,' is becoming stylish in America.

**earth, *n., v.t.***

**1. ground**

**2. cover with soil**

**3. run to ground**

1. Term used in electricity. The Americans *ground* a wire; the British *earth* it. The same distinction occurs in the noun use of this electrical term.

2. To *earth* the roots of a plant is to *cover* them *with soil*.

3. To *earth* a fox is to *run* it to *earth*.

**earth floor or earthen floor**

**dirt floor**

**earthly, *adj.***

**chance; hope**

*Inf.* Often used elliptically, always in the negative, to mean '(not a) chance;' '(not a) hope.' A slang American equivalent in some contexts is *no way*. For example, *Do you think he'll succeed?* might be answered, *Not an earthly!* in Britain, and *No way!* in America.

**East, *n.***

**Orient**

The British usually speak of the *East* rather than the *Orient*.

**East End**

SEE COMMENT

The Eastern part of London, which, like its Manhattan parallel, the Lower East Side, was the area in which immigrants settled during the first half of the century. It is still essentially a working-class area.

**east end of a westbound cow**

**south end of a northbound horse**

All this to avoid saying or hearing *ass*.

**easy about it.** See **I'm easy (about it).**

**easy as kiss your hand.** See **as easy as kiss your hand.**

**easy meat**

1. *Slang.* **a cinch**

2. *Slang.* **sucker**

1. *Slang.* Something or someone easily obtained, attained, or mastered, as in, *It was easy meat getting it right, or getting the tickets.*

2. *Slang.* Originally the phrase was applied mainly to people, connoting passivity or gullibility, as in, *The immigrants were easy meat for the politicians. Pushover and easy pickin's* are other American equivalents. It is still used of a susceptible woman.

**eat one's terms**

**study for the bar**

To *study for the bar* is a less general term in Britain than in America. It refers only to preparation to become a **barrister**. An aspiring barrister *eats his terms* or his *dinners* (three dinners in the Hall of his **Inn of Court** each of four Terms per year) in order to *keep his terms* in compliance with British bar admission requirements. This phrase is a pleasant survival from the days when the Inns of Court more or less constituted residential universities where, naturally, the students took their meals.

**eddy forth**

**sally forth**

Both used by the British and by the Americans.

**eiderdown, n.**

**quilt; comforter**

Used generically for all quilts, not necessarily those filled with the soft feathers of the female eider. See also **duvet**.

**Eights Week.** See **May Week.**

**Elastoplast, n.**

**Band-Aid**

The proprietary name for adhesive bandage.

**electric fire**

**electric heater**

See under **fire**.

**elementary school**

**grade school**

Or *primary school* in America.

**elephant's, adj.**

*Slang.* **tight**

*Slang. Drunk.* Short for *elephant's trunk*. Cockney rhyming slang; see **Appendix II.G.3.**

**elevator, n.**

**lift**

An *elevator* in Britain is not a device for vertical conveyance of people or things. Its generic meaning is 'anything that lifts,' but its common meaning is 'shoe lift.' (This use is seen in America, too, in the term *elevator shoes*.) Conversely, a British **lift** is an American *elevator*.

**eleven, n.**

**cricket team; soccer team**

*Inf.* In American sports terminology, an *eleven* would mean a 'football team' (using *football* in the American sense; see **football**). An *eleven* in Britain refers to

cricket or soccer and means a 'side.' Roman numerals are often used: first XI (the first team), second XI (the reserve team). Similarly, a rugby team is a XV, but note that a rowing crew is an *eight*, not an VIII, though in listing their order, crews might be designated *1st VIII*, *2nd VIII*, etc.

### eleven plus

SEE COMMENT

An examination, in the nature of an aptitude and achievement test. Meant to be taken at the end of primary school, it determined what type of secondary education was most suitable for the child, with the most academically gifted going to *grammar schools*, those exhibiting a practical bent to technical or vocational schools, and the remainder, a majority, to *secondary modern schools*. In practice, the examination was looked upon by parents as a pass/fail exam for the prestigious grammar schools. Formerly widespread but now eliminated except for scattered pockets of resistance in Britain, this system has been largely replaced by nonselective *comprehensive schools* which claim to provide for all aptitudes and levels of ability. Public education (called *state education* in Britain) is free. Parents may opt out of the state system by sending their children to fee-paying private schools. Those catering to children aged 8–12 are called **prep schools**; those for 13–18 year olds are called **public schools**. The entrance examination for public schools is called the **Common Entrance Examination**.

### eleveneses, *n. pl.*

*approx. morning coffee break*

*Inf.* Also called *elevens* and *elevenesies*. The light refreshments consumed in this British morning exercise consist usually of a cup of coffee and a **biscuit** or two. *Morning coffee* is another term used by the British to describe this social practice, which takes place at home, in hotels, and in tearooms.

**embus.** See **debus**.

### Employment Secretary

*approx. Secretary of Labor*

### encash, *v.t.*

cash

One **encashes** (accent on the second syllable) a **cheque** (*check*).

### end, *n.*

butt

Patrons of London theaters and other public places are usually provided with wall receptacles, partly filled with sand, bearing the legend "Cigarette Ends." See also **stump**; **dog-end**.

### endive, *n.*

chicory

In a British vegetable store (**greengrocer's**), if you want *chicory* ask for *endive*, and vice versa.

### endorse, *v.t.*

record on license

Under a point system similar to that used in America, a British operator's license is said to be *endorsed* with a record of the offense.

### engage, *v.t.*

hire; employ

A Briton *engages* a chauffeur and *hires* a car; an American *hires* a chauffeur and *rents* a car. In America, one *rents* a house to or from another. In Britain, you *rent* a house *from* the owner and *let* your own *to* a tenant. However, the sign TO LET is seen in both countries.

**engaged, adj.**

It is as frustrating to be told by a British telephone operator that the line is *engaged* or to hear the *engaged tone* as it is to hear the word *busy* or the *busy signal* in America. *He's engaged*, used by a British **telephonist**, is just as irritating in Britain as the dreary American equivalents *He's busy talking* or *He's on the wire*.

**busy****engine driver**

Railroad term.

**engineer****enquiries, n. pl.**

(Stressed on the second syllable.) This is the term you use in Britain when you want *Information* to look up a telephone number for you. It also appears on signs in offices, railway stations, etc., where the American sign would read INFORMATION. *Trunk enquiries* means 'long-distance information.' See **trunk Enquiries**.

**information****enquiry, n.**

(Stressed on the second syllable.) This word is often used where *investigation* would be used in America, e.g., in discussing an attempt to ferret out wrongdoing in a government department. A similar sense is found in the British term *enquiry agent*, which would be *private investigator* or *private detective* in America. It is also used as the equivalent of the American term *hearing*, e.g., *planning enquiry*, which is the British equivalent of *zoning hearing*. An *enquiry office* is an *information bureau*.

**investigation****ENSA, n.**

An acronym for *Entertainments National Service Association*. Like the American *USO* (stands for *United Service Organizations*) it supplied entertainment to the armed forces. ENSA gave its final show on August 18, 1946, the last of two and a half million performances.

**approx. USO****ensure, v.t.**

Instructions from a travel agency: "Please *ensure* your baggage is correctly labelled." (See **Appendix I.E.** for the third *l* in *labelled*.) This usage of *ensure* would be found in commercial, government or other 'official' communications, rarely, if ever, in ordinary writing or speech.

**make sure****entrance fee**

This is the term used by the British to describe the initial fee paid on joining a club.

**initiation fee****entry, n.**

Sign over a door in a public building. See **No Entry**. The American term **no entrance** is used as well.

**entrance****erk, n.**

*Slang*. Formerly *airk*, which meant aircraft mechanic and technician. After it became *erk*, it was taken as 'beginner, rookie.'

**Slang. rookie****Ernie, n.**

Used in selecting **Premium Bond** winning numbers; an acronym for *electronic random number indicator equipment*.

**SEE COMMENT**

**escape lane (road)**

SEE COMMENT

A means of egress off a main highway for a vehicle in difficulties; usually in the U.S. called *emergency exit* or *egress*.

**Esq., n.****Mr.**

Short, of course, for *Esquire*. In addressing letters, *Esq.* follows the name, and is simply the equivalent of *Mr.* preceding the name. American convention calls for addressing lawyers as *Esq.* *Esq.* is not used where the name is preceded by a title (e.g., Prof. C.E. Jones, Sir Charles Smith). See **Appendix I.D.7**.

**(the) Establishment**

SEE COMMENT

*The Establishment* describes those British institutions (and their representatives) that symbolize tradition and conformity and wield considerable social, financial, and political influence: the upper classes, the Church of England, *The Times*, **Whitehall**, and the Marylebone Cricket Club. *The Establishment* is used roughly the same way in America, but its components are quite different. According to Leonard and Mark Silk (*The American Establishment*, Basic, 1980), the Establishment, American style, is a "bringing together of intellectuals, under the benevolent governance of (big) business, rather than that of the state."

**estate, n.****real estate development**

Usually found in the terms *housing estate*, meaning a 'residential development,' or *industrial estate*, signifying an area designated for industry, work shops and offices. British housing officials and other experts use *estate* or *housing estate* as the exact equivalent of the American term *housing project*, to denote any development of one or more buildings comprising a number of households.

**estate agent****real estate broker**

Synonymous with **land agent**.

**estate car****station wagon**

It also used to be called *estate wagon*, but that term is rarely heard nowadays.

**evens, n. pl.****Inf. even money**

*Inf.* The odds: *Evens on . . .* means 'I will lay you *even money* on . . .'

**ever so****very**

*He's ever so handsome. She was ever so kind.* Non-U. See **Appendix I.C.6**.

**everything in the garden's lovely****Inf. everything's hunky-dory**

*Inf.* An old-fashioned catch phrase.

**everything that opens and shuts****Inf. everything but the kitchen sink**

*Inf.* *The price of my new car includes everything that opens and shuts.* The expression could apply as well to a hand at cards full of trumps and honors.

**except for access****approx. no through trucks**

Preceded by numerals indicating width or weight (e.g., 6' 6", or 3 TONS) on a sign at the ingress of a back road, forbidding entrance (**entry**) to a vehicle over the specified width or weight, unless it is in fact headed for a destination on that road. See **access**, for a different usage of that word by itself. See **pinch-point**.

**Exchequer, n.**

The *Chancellor of the Exchequer* is the British equivalent of the *Secretary of the Treasury*.

**Treasury Department****exclamation mark****exclamation point****exclusive line****private line**

Telephone term. Sometimes the telephone company, Telecom, in its literature uses the quaint phrase *exclusive working* to describe this luxury. The less fortunate have **shared lines** or *party lines*.

**ex-directory, adj.****unlisted**

Referring to telephone numbers.

**exeat, n.****temporary school leave**

(Pronounced EX'EE-AT.) Term used in schools and colleges. Like the more familiar word *exit*, it is a form of the Latin verb *exire*, 'to go forth'; here literally meaning *let him go out*.

**(the) Executive, n.****(the) Executive Committee**

Used the way Americans use *the Management* at the end of notices posted in public places, like railroad stations and post offices.

**exercise book****notebook**

Sometimes referred to as a **jotter**.

**exhibition; exhibitor. See under bursar.****export carriage****overseas shipping**

Seen as an extra charge item on bills for goods sent overseas, like tea bought in England and shipped to America.

**express, adj., adv.****special delivery**

Post office term. The American designation has now been adopted by the G.P.O. See **recorded delivery**. The U.S. Post Office now has 'Express Mail,' a premium overnight service available at a price.

**ex-service man****veteran****external painting****outdoor painting**

Builders' and contractors' term.

**extractor fan****exhaust fan****extra-mural studies****extension courses**

**Extraordinary General Meeting.** See under **Annual General Meeting**.

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**fab, adj.**

*Slang.* **cool**

*Slang.* A teenage truncation of *fabulous* and synonymous with **gear** and **kinky**, all of which are out of fashion now, though they can be used as jocular exaggerations. *Kinky* has another grown-up meaning.

**face cloth, n.**

SEE COMMENT

The British call an ordinary washrag or facecloth a **flannel**.

**facer, n.**

*Inf.* **obstacle**

*Inf.* *Facer* is rarely heard in either country in its literal meaning of 'blow in the face.' In Britain it has the special meaning of a difficulty you suddenly come up against.

**faculty, n.**

**college department**

In America, the *faculty* of a college is its entire teaching body. In Britain, this is called **staff**, and *faculty* is confined to groups of academically related subjects, i.e., departments, as in *Faculty of Medicine, Law*, etc.

**faddy, adj.**

*Inf.* **picky**

*Inf.* Often used to describe persons who are fussy about their food and difficult to please. See also **dainty**.

**fadge, v.i.**

**suit**

*Slang.* Especially in the expression *It won't fadge*, meaning 'It won't suit' (or 'do' or 'fit'). "How will this *fadge*?" asks the sleuth, "No good, it won't *fadge*."

**fag, n., v.t., v.i.**

1. *v.i.*, **toil**

2. *v.i.*, **exhaust**

3. *n.*, *Slang.* **drag**

4. *n.*, *Slang.* **cigarette**

5. SEE COMMENT

1. *v.i.*, *Slang.* To *toil* painfully.

2. *v.t.*, *Slang.* To *tire* or *wear* (someone) out.

3. *n.*, *Slang.* In the sense of 'drudgery'; a painfully boring job.

4. *Slang.* *Cigarette* in Britain.

5. *Slang.* In **public school** slang, when seniors *fag*, it means that they are using the services of juniors; when juniors *fag*, it means that they are rendering services to seniors and the junior so serving is known as a *fag*.

**faggot, n.**

1. **crone**

2. **spiced meatball**

1. *Inf.* Chiefly a country term, summoning the image of a battered old slut.

2. Made of chopped pig innards (see **offal**) and fairly heavily spiced. The common American slang use of *faggot* to mean 'male homosexual' has caught on in Britain, particularly in entertainment circles and among the jet set.

### **fains I!**

SEE COMMENT

*Slang.* Also *fain I! vains I!* and other regional variants like *fainites! vainites!* and even *cribs! scribs! crosses! keys!* and goodness knows what else, usually accompanied by conspicuously crossed fingers. All these are truce words meaning that the crier wants his pals to wait a minute—calling for a halt, for example, in a fast children's game. Only an unscrupulous bully would take advantage of a call for truce. See a special use of *fains* under **Quis? Bags I!** is the opposite of *fains I!*

### **fair, adv.**

*Inf.* **surely**

*Inf.* *That sermon fair set us thinking!* Substandard; mostly rustic.

### **fair-light, n.**

**transom**

### **fair old . . . , adj.**

*Inf.* **quite a . . .**

*Inf.* *A fair old job* means 'quite a job' (*a major chore*); *a fair old mix-up* means 'quite a mix-up' (*a snafu of major proportions*).

### **fair's on**

*Inf.* **what's fair is fair**

*Inf.* To the friend who paid for a round of drinks, a Briton might say: "*Fair's on . . .*, this one's on me."

### **fairy cake**

**cupcake**

### **fall about laughing**

*Slang.* **die laughing**

*Slang.* Sometimes shortened to *fall about*, with *laughing* understood, especially in the **cockney** idiom.

### **fallen off the back of a lorry**

*Slang.* **hot**

*Slang.* A **lorry** is a *truck*. A thief or black marketeer, seeking to dispose of ill-gotten wares, approaches a pedestrian and assures him that the fur coat or wristwatch or whatever *fell off the back of a lorry* and went unclaimed by police.

### **fall over backwards**

*Inf.* **bend over backwards**

Do one's darndest to accomplish something worthwhile.

### **family butcher**

**butcher shop**

Often *first-class family butcher*, typically one that does not serve institutions. See also **butchery**.

### **fancy.** See **fancy one's chances.**

### **fancy goods**

**notions**

See also **draper's shop; haberdashery.**

### **fancy one's chances**

*Inf.* **have high hopes**

*Inf.* The hopeful swain *fancies his chances* with the girl; the team with a comfortable margin *fancy their chances* for the cup. One may fancy one's own or

another's chances, but when the expression applies to a third party, it is often found in the negative. After attending a disappointing first night: *I don't fancy its chances*, or, about a friend about to enter a tournament: *I don't fancy his chances*.

**fanny, n.**

**1. Slang. backside**

**2. vulgar. cunt**

1. *Slang*. Originally, this word meant the female pudenda, but the American sense—'backside,' 'behind,' 'derrière'—appears to have become its primary meaning now in Britain, as a result of importation from America, where it has never had the second meaning. Yet it might be just as well to avoid its use in Britain, because there are those, among the elderly at least, and perhaps the not-so-elderly in less chic circles, who might be shocked, and certainly puzzled, if it were applied to a male.

2. *Vulgar Slang*. This is the original British meaning, and the word is still understood or may be understood that way in some circles.

**Fanny Adams.** See **sweet Fanny Adams**.

**fare stage**

**bus fare zone limit**

In both countries *stage* appears in the phrase *stage of a journey*, and as part of *stage-coach*, especially in American movies about the Wild West. In Britain, *fare stages* are the *zone limits* for purposes of computing bus fares.

**farthing n.**

SEE COMMENT

One fourth of an old penny, a coin long since demonetized; but the term is still used figuratively to mean a 'bit' in expressions like *It doesn't matter a farthing*. See **Appendix II.A.** and, for idiomatic use, **halfpenny**.

**fart in a colander, Slang**

**restless soul**

One who jumps around from one chore to the next, unable to make up his mind what to start first. This indelicate expression suggests an anal wind emission unable to decide which hole in the colander to pass through. Synonymous with **tit in a trance**.

**fast, adj.**

**express**

Applied to trains and to roads (express or limited highways). A local train is called a **stopping train**, or **slow train**.

**Father Christmas**

**Santa Claus**

The British also use *Santa Claus*.

**fat rascal**

**soft bun**

*Inf.* Stuffed with black currants.

**faults and service difficulties**

**telephone repair department**

This is the department you ask for on your neighbor's telephone when yours isn't working. A *faulty* telephone is one that is out of order.

**feed, n.**

**1. feeding**

**2. straight man**

1. Usually in the context of formula feeding. To *go onto feeds* is to *go onto formula*, e.g., *My little one is on six feeds a day*. Technically, a *feed* can be any variety—breast, formula, or cereal.

2. The member of the comedy duo who *feeds* cues to the gag man.

**feeder, n.**

**child's bib**

**feel, v.i.**

**feel like**

For example, *I feel a perfect fool!*

**feeling not quite the thing, Inf.**

*Inf.* **feel below par**

**felicitate, v.t.**

**congratulate**

**Fellow, n.**

**member of college governing body**

In Oxford and some other universities, also called **don**. The chairman of the governing body is called the *Master* in most **Oxbridge** colleges, but in addition to the eight Masters, there are seven Wardens, five Principals, three Provosts and two Rectors. At Cambridge, *Master* is the title with only four exceptions: one each of Provost, President, Mistress and Principal. At Oxford and Cambridge *Fellow* can best be defined as 'senior teaching or administrative member' of a college. There are all sorts and varieties of *Fellow*: *Research Fellows*, *Junior Research Fellows*, *Honorary Fellows*, *Emeritus Fellows*, *Quondam* (or *ex-*) *Fellows*.

**fender, n.**

**bumper**

Old automobile term; but American *fender* is British **wing**. *Bumper* is now universal. (See also **Appendix II.E**.)

**(the) Fens, n. pl.**

SEE COMMENT

Name given to the marshy district of the eastern part of the country, west and south of *the Wash*, a shallow bay in that section of England.

**fetch, v.t.**

**bring**

As in, to *fetch* a price in an auction. The British use *make* in the same way.

**fête, n.**

**fair**

(Pronounced FATE.) An important part of British life. Most organizations, as well as every village in Britain, down to the smallest, organize a *fête*. The village *fête* is annual and is a small-scale country fair, sometimes preceded by a parade with floats.

**fiddle, n., v.t., v.i.**

**swindle**

To *fiddle* is to *cheat*, and to *fiddle the books* is to *engage in shady dealings*. A *fiddle* is usually a minor cheat. To *be on the fiddle* is to engage in minor swindling. When the offense is of major proportions, the British use *swindle*. See also **diddle**; **do**; **carve up**; **ramp**; **sell a pup**; **swizz**; **take down**; **cook**.

**fiddling, adj.**

**petty; futile; contemptible**

**field, v.t.**

**put up**

Speaking of political candidates. Americans and Britons alike *field* teams or armies, i.e., put them in the field, but only the British *field* candidates.

**fieldsman, n.****fielder**

**Cricket** vs. baseball (See also **batsman**). *Fielder* is commonly used in Britain, but *fieldsman* is unknown in America.

**fifty-fifty sale****split even**

You collect all those things you want to get rid of, take them to a scheduled charity sale, and split the proceeds *fifty-fifty* with the charity.

**file, n.****loose-leaf binder**

A British schoolboy or university student will keep his notes in a *file*.

**filibuster, n., v.i.****buccaneer**

*Filibuster* originally meant the same thing in both countries: as a verb, 'engage in unauthorized warfare against a foreign power,' as a noun, a 'buccaneer' or 'pirate' engaged in that activity. In Britain, it does not have the specialized American sense of an endless speech, especially in the Senate and the House of Representatives, designed to obstruct proceedings and prevent a vote on unwanted legislation.

**fillet, n.****tenderloin**

(Rhymes with MILLET, not MILLAY.) On an American restaurant menu the equivalent would be *tenderloin steak*, or perhaps *fillet mignon*.

**fill in****fill out**

The British *fill in* or *fill up* a form; the Americans *fill in* or *fill out* a form. See **Appendix I.A.1**. *Fill out* is creeping into Britain.

**film, n.****movie**

A *film* is a *movie* (i.e., a motion picture). A **cinema** is the theater that shows it. In old-fashioned slang, one went to the **flicks** to see a *flick*.

**filthy, adj.***Inf.* **lousy**

*Inf.* As in *Filthy weather we're having; She's had a filthy time of it; He has a filthy temper.*

**financial, adj.***Inf.* **well-heeled**

*Inf.* Mainly Australian and New Zealand, but used jocularly in Britain on occasion. *Let me buy the drinks; I'm financial tonight or, I'm feeling financial.*

**financial year****fiscal year**

An accounting term.

**find, v.t.****like**

When the manager of the inn asks you as you are leaving, "How did you *find* us?" he is asking you how you *liked* his inn.

**fine down***Inf.* **thin down; clear up**

*Inf.* To *fine* (something) *down, away* or *off* is to make it thinner. Transitively, referring to the brewing of beer, it means to 'clear up'. Intransitively, referring to any liquid, it means to 'become clear,' as in the case of a wine whose sediment has settled.

**finger****shot of booze**

*Slang.* An alcoholic drink one finger-thickness in the glass.

**fingerling, n.**

In America, more broadly, it means anything small and specifically any fish no longer than your finger.

**young salmon****fire, n.**

As in *electric fire*; *gas fire*; but also used elliptically meaning either. See also **-fired**.

**heater****fire brigade****fire department****-fired**

SEE COMMENT

The British speak of *oil-fired*, *gas-fired*, etc., *central heating*. This is shortened to *oil heat*, *gas heat*, etc., in America. See also **fire**.

**fire-flair n.****stingray****fire-guard, n.****fire screen****fire-irons, n. pl.****fireplace implements****fire office****fire insurance company office****fire-pan, n.****metal grate****fire-raising, n.**

A *fire-raiser* is an arsonist.

**arson****firewood, n.****kindling**

*Firewood*, in America, is any wood for burning, usually in a fireplace for heat, but also outdoors for cooking. The American term includes *kindling*. In Britain where most fireplaces contain grates for the burning of coal, *firewood* denotes merely wood to start the fire with, and is either gathered outdoors or is bought at the **ironmonger's** (*hardware store*) in small wire-bound bundles of thin, short sticks.

**first, n.***Inf.* **summa**

*Inf.* *First* is a university term which is short for *first-class honours* and is roughly equivalent to *summa* in America, which is short for *summa cum laude*. There are *seconds* and *thirds* as well. See **class**. One says, *He got a first in physics*.

**first class***approx.* **major league**

Sports terminology. This pairing is as approximate as the respective national games; *first-class* cricket, *major league* baseball. There is also *second-class* cricket, very roughly analogous to *minor league* baseball, involving the second **elevens** of first class counties and the first **elevens** of second class counties, each category with its own championship.

**first floor****second floor**

Americans use *first floor* and *ground floor* interchangeably to describe an apartment on the ground level, and *main floor* or *street floor* to describe the ground level of a shop or office building. The British use *ground floor* to describe all of those

things, but when they say *first floor*, they mean the next floor up, i.e., the floor above the ground floor, or what Americans call the *second floor*. This difference continues all the way to the top, of course. Though Americans call the floor above the ground floor the *second floor*, inhabitants of that floor are also heard to say that they live *one flight up*.

**first knock.** See **take first knock**.

**fish, n.**

**fish and seafood**

In Britain *fish* usually includes *seafood*, edible salt water shellfish.

**fisher.** See **bradbury**.

**fish fingers**

**fish sticks**

**fishing story, n.**

**fish story**

**fishmonger's**

**fish store**

**fish 'n' chips**

SEE COMMENT

Fish fried in batter and served with French fried potatoes (see **chips**). This fish used to be cod, most of the time, in the cheaper places, and plaice, a European flatfish, in the better places, and here and there other varieties of fish. As a result of the "cod war" the price of cod has rocketed, and haddock and hake are the normal fare in the usual fish 'n' chips place. In the more casual type of establishment, this dish used to be served wrapped in a piece of newspaper (a practice made illegal), and specialist gourmets insist that the newspaper ink lent an incomparable flavor that cannot be duplicated. The normal procedure is to douse this dish in vinegar, Brown Sauce, or Daddy's Sauce, which are, like ketchup in America, ubiquitous.

**fish-slice,**

**spatula**

*Inf.* Literally, a cook's implement for carving and for turning fish while it is cooking, and for removing it from the pan; but used informally to mean 'spatula' generally. In that sense, synonymous with **palette-knife**.

**fish, wet.** See **wet fish**.

**fit?, adj.**

*Inf.* **all set?**

*Inf.* Usually asked in the form, *Are you fit?*

**fitments, n. pl.**

**fixtures**

Of a shop or factory.

**fits.** See **give (someone) fits**.

**fitted, adj.**

**wall-to-wall**

Used of carpeting. Another phrase, though less common is *edge-to-edge*. *Wall-to-wall* is beginning to be used frequently, especially in its extended senses.

**fitter, n.**

**plumber; mechanic**

Americans use the phrase *steam fitter* to refer to a mechanic who installs or repairs steam pipe systems but do not use *fitter*, as the British do loosely, to mean a

'repairman' or 'plumber.' In Britain you send for the *fitter* whether your home radiator or your boat engine, as just two examples, is out of order.

**fittings**, *n. pl.*

**fixtures**

*Shop fittings* in Britain are called *store fixtures* in America.

**fit-up**, *adj.*

*Slang. pick-up*

*Slang.* Theatrical slang, to describe a temporary touring company, assembled from hither and yon and provided with portable stage scenery. The term can be applied to other types of organization.

**five honours.** See **four honours.**

**fiver**, *n.*

*approx. five*

A *fiver* is a *five-pound note* (see **note**), worth about \$8. A *fiver* (more commonly a *five*) in America is, of course, a *five-dollar bill*.

**fives**, *n.*

**handball**

The games are roughly similar.

**five-star.** See **four-star.**

**fixings**, *n. pl.*

**hardware**

What Americans call the *hardware* on a window, swinging gate, or other such equipment, is called the *fixings* in Britain.

**fixture**, *n.*

**scheduled sporting event**

In the British sports world what the Americans call an *event* is called a *fixture*.

**Flag Day**

**Tag Day**

The day on which people solicit you for contributions to a cause and give you something to put on your lapel to prove you've come through. In Britain you get little flags; in America you may get paper poppies on the end of a pin.

**flake out**

*Inf. pass out*

*Inf.* Faint, collapse from exhaustion.

**flaming**, *adj., adv.*

*Slang. damned*

*Inf.* Synonymous with **flipping**, **ruddy**, **bloody**.

**flan**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

Sponge cake or pastry with fruit filling, usually with a layer of whipped cream as well. *Flan* in America is caramel custard.

**flannel**, *n.*

**face cloth**

Also known in America as *washcloth* or *washrag*. But when the British talk of a **wash-cloth** they mean what is known in America as a *dishcloth*.

**flannel**, *n., v.t., v.i., Slang.*

1. *n., Slang. soft soap; flattery*

2. *v.t., Slang. soft-soap; flatter*

3. *v.i., Slang. talk one's way out*

**flapjack, n.**

1. SEE COMMENT

2. lady's flat compact

1. Type of cookie. *Flapjack* now also means 'pancake' in Britain.

2. A portable container for face powder.

**flash, adj.**

flashy

**flat, n.**

apartment

*A block of flats is an apartment house. See block; apartment.***flat, adj.**

dead

Describing batteries that have come to the end of their useful lives.

**flat out**

at full speed

*Inf. Flat out to a Briton suggests a race, particularly a horse race, with the winner (by a nose) going all out, using every ounce of power. In Britain, it does not have the sense of 'plainly' or 'directly,' as in (American) I told him flat-out what I thought of him.***flat spin. See in a flat spin.****fleck, n.**

lint

*Inf. The bits that cling annoyingly to dark woolen clothing. Fluff and lint are the usual terms in Britain and America.***fleet, n., adj.**

1. creek

2. shallow

Heard from time to time.

**Fleet Street**

the press

*Inf. See Throgmorton Street, Wardour Street, and other street names used synecdochically, to indicate various businesses and professions. Grub Street is the former name of a London street, changed to Milton Street in 1830. Samuel Johnson described it as "Much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called grubstreet." The term is now used metaphorically for starving writers, literary hacks and their output.***flex, n.**

electric cord; extension

Abbreviation of *flexible*, used as a noun.**flexible (table) lamp**

gooseneck lamp

**flexitime, n.**

flexitime

A system in Britain and America whereunder an employee works a fixed number of hours but at times partly as the worker chooses.

**flick-knife, n.**

switchblade

**flicks, n. pl.**

movies

*Slang. Still heard. See film.***flies, n. pl.**

fly

The fly of a man's trousers is commonly heard as *flies* in Britain.

**flimsy, n.****thin copy paper**

*Inf.* Particularly the type favored by Her Majesty's ministries. The word can also mean a carbon copy of something typed on such paper.

**flipping, adj., adv.****damned**

*Slang.* More or less equivalent to **bloody** but thought to be more polite. Pejorative and intensive. See synonyms under **bloody**.

**float, n.****petty cash fund****flog, v.t.****1. Slang. push****2. Slang. sell illegally****3. Slang. lick (vanquish)****4. Slang. swipe**

1. *Slang.* In Britain *flog* describes the hard sell, whether the insistent effort to *dispose of goods* or to *press an idea*.

2. *Slang.* Applies to stolen or smuggled goods *flogged* on the black market, for example. See also **fallen off the back of a lorry**.

3. *Slang.* To *flog* one's competitors, whether in sports or competitive examinations, is to *trounce* them, to *beat them all hollow*.

4. *Slang.* To borrow without the owner's permission, with only the vaguest intention of returning.

**flog it****plod**

*Military slang.* To *flog it* is to *walk* or *plod*. See also **foot-slog**.

**floor, v.t.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* When a British schoolboy stands up to recite and isn't prepared, the teacher (**master**) *floors* him, i.e., tells him to sit down. *Floor* shares the general American colloquial meaning 'overcome' or 'shatter' someone with a devastating riposte.

**Floral Dance. See Furry Dance.****fluff, n.****lint**

A *bit of fluff* was British slang for *chick* in the sense of *gal*. It might have referred to the relative youth of the female companion of an older man, but no real harm was meant by it. See **fleck; bit of**.

**fluff, v.t., v.i.****1. Slang. juggle****2. lie; bluff**

1. *Slang.* As in *fluff the books* (accounts).

2. *Slang.* As in *Don't take him seriously; he's fluffing*.

**flutter, n., v.i.****gamble**

*Slang.* A *flutter* is a small *bet*.

**fly, adj.****wide awake**

*Slang.* Ingenious, crafty, clever. The current American term *street-wise* is a close equivalent.

**fly a kite, Inf.****Inf. send up a trial balloon**

**fly on the wall****invisible onlooker**

*Inf.* Someone who would give anything to be a *fly on the wall* means he would love to witness a meeting, confrontation, etc. unobserved.

**fly-over, n.****overpass**

A bridge or viaduct for carrying one road over another.

**fly-post, v.i.**

## SEE COMMENT

To put up notices or advertising rapidly and surreptitiously on unauthorized walls.

**fobbed off (with)****Slang. stuck (with)**

*Slang.* Both countries use *fob off* in the sense of palming off inferior merchandise, but only the British use the past passive participle this way to indicate the resulting situation of the victim.

**fob pocket****watch pocket**

Tailor's term.

**fogged, adj., Slang.****befuddled****foggiest, adj.****Inf. faintest**

*Inf.* Usually met with in the negative expression *I haven't the foggiest*, meaning 'I haven't the slightest (idea)'. In this expression, *foggiest* is used as a substantive, like *slightest* or *faintest* when the modified noun (*idea* or *notion*) is omitted.

**Follow?, v.i.****See?**

Often heard in Britain and America in the question *Do you follow?* meaning 'Do you see?' or 'Are you with me?'

**folly, n.****whimsical structure**

A peculiar, nonfunctional structure built for no apparent reason other than the whim of an estate owner with too much leisure and money and lots of whimsy; usually found on 18th-century English estates.

**fool, n.**

## SEE COMMENT

A dessert of stewed fruit, crushed and mixed with custard or cream and served cold.

**football, n.****soccer**

As the name of a game, *football*, in Britain, is short for *Association football*, the game that Americans call *soccer*. The nearest equivalent in Britain to American football is the game called *Rugby football*, or simply *Rugby*, but most commonly called *rugger*. This game is played in uniforms like the ones used in *soccer*, without helmets, padding, nose guards, etc.

**footer, n.****soccer**

*Schoolboy slang.* See **football**.

**footpath. See footway.****footplate, n.****engineer's and fireman's platform**

*Railroading.* The engineer (**engine driver**, in Britain) and fireman are known collectively as *footplatemen*. Loosely used to designate the whole locomotive cab.

**foot-slog, v.i.**

*Slang.* A *foot-slogger* is a *hiker*; the word is sometimes taken to mean 'infantryman.'  
See also **flog it**.

**trudge****footway, n.**

An old-fashioned term, still seen on street signs threatening pedestrians with fines if they permit their dogs to "foul the *footway*." Also *footpath*. In the countryside, where there aren't any sidewalks, both words refer to any path for walkers. **Pavement** is the common British term.

**sidewalk****(the) forces, n. pl.**

In the sense of the *armed forces*. A Briton would speak of 'leaving the forces.' An American would most likely say something like 'When I get out of the army.'

**(the) service****forecourt, n.**

Applied in Britain to a service station, *forecourt* means the 'area where gas (**petrol**) is pumped.' Thus one sees help-wanted ads for a *forecourt attendant*, i.e., somebody to man the gas pumps. Also, in Britain and America, a tennis term meaning the area near the net.

**front yard****Foreign Office**

Now called the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).

*approx.* **State Department****forged, adj.**

The British speak of a forged **note**, the Americans of a *counterfeit* bill.

**counterfeit****for it**

*Inf.* In deep trouble. *Oh, he's for it now!* See also **for the high jump**.

*Inf.* **in for it****fork supper**

*Inf.* This term is applied to a meal that can be eaten without a knife. *Fork lunch* is also used. Roughly speaking, the American equivalent of *fork* in this context might be thought to be *buffet*, as in a well-planned *buffet lunch* or *buffet dinner*, at which a knife is not needed. A *fork meal* in Britain is definitely one in which a knife is superfluous. For the converse of this situation, see **knife-and-fork tea**.

**buffet****form, n.**

1. A school usage. Used in America, but rarely.
2. As in, *He was punished for sleeping in form.*

1. **grade**
2. **class**

**for the high jump**

*Slang.* A grim echo of a hanging (the *high jump*). The phrase is now used to refer to any threatened or imminent punishment; especially drastic punishment.

*Slang.* **in for it****for the matter of that**

The American form is occasionally used in Britain as well.

**for that matter****fortnight, n.**

This is a common word in Britain, somewhat archaic or formal in America. *Today fortnight*, *Monday fortnight*, etc., mean 'two weeks from today, two weeks from

**two weeks**

Monday,' etc. *Week* is used in the same way in Britain: *today week*, *Friday week*, etc. *This day fortnight* (or *week*) is still heard, too. *I'd rather keep him a week than a fortnight* is a quaint, if mildly callous, way of saying, *He's a big eater*. See also **Appendix I.D.5**.

**for toffee.** See **toffee**.

**forward**, *v.t.*

By land, sea, or air.

**ship**

**fossick**, *v.i.*

*Slang.* **mess around**

*Slang.* With no clear purpose. To *fossick after* something is to *rummage about* for it. The word derives from an Australian term for those who picked over abandoned gold workings. In some British dialects *fussock* means 'bustle about,' and that may be reflected here as well. See also **frig about**.

**found**, **all** (or **fully**.) See **fully found**.

**foundation member**

**charter member**

**foundation-stone**, *n.*

**cornerstone**

**fourball**, *n.*

**foursome**

Golf term. When the British say *foursome*, they mean a 'Scotch foursome,' a two ball match, in which the partners on each side stroke alternately at one ball. An American foursome has two players on each of two teams, all playing their own balls.

**four honours**

**100 honours**

A term used in bridge, meaning any four of the top five cards in the trump suit. *Five honours*, as you might expect, means 150 honours.

**fourpenny one**, *Inf.*

*Slang.* **sock on the jaw**

**four-star**

**premium**

Designation of gasoline (**petrol**) high-octane rating. *Two-star* is *regular*. In America *four stars* are the domain of generals and admirals.

**four up.** See **make a four up**.

**Four Wents**

**Four Corners**

This is not only a general term meaning 'intersection' but a very common place name in the British countryside. The *Four Wents*, or the *Four Went Ways*, is always a place name designating a specific intersection. The *Four Corners* is a classic bucolic general term rather than a specific place name in the American countryside. The *Went* in the British expression is derived from the word *wend*, in the sense of 'turn' or 'direct.'

**fowl**, *n.* See under **chicken**.

**fowl-run**, *n.* See under **chicken**.

**fraternity** *n.*

Never has the sense of 'male college society' (*frat*), an institution unknown in Britain.

**religious organization****frazzled**, *adj.*

*Slang*. Applied to a person who has looked after obstreperous children for far too long, put in too much overtime, etc.

*Inf.* **worn out****Fred Karno's army**

*Inf.* Fred Karno was a **music-hall** (*vaudeville*) comedian during World War I and did an act involving a joke army. Jacob Sechler Coxey was a U.S. political reformer who led a civilian march on Washington in 1894 to petition Congress for unemployment relief. (He died in 1951 at the age of 97.) Old-fashioned Americans use the phrase *Coxey's army* to describe any motley throng. Among old-fashioned Britons, *Fred Karno's army* is a term usually applied to any sort of chaotic organization.

*approx. Inf.* **Coxey's army****Free Church.** See **chapel**.**freephone**, *n.***tollfree number****freehold**, *n.*

This term, as opposed to *leasehold*, means 'title to real estate,' whether outright or for life. It implies *ownership* as opposed to *tenancy*. A person enjoying such ownership is a *freeholder*. In 1430, Parliament limited the right to vote in the election of Members of Parliament to *forty-shilling freeholders*, i.e., those owning real property whose rental value was at least forty shillings per annum, a respectable sum in those days. Today, every British subject has the vote, except **peers**, lunatics, and other special categories.

*approx.* **title****free house**

Most pubs are tied in with a particular brewery, at least in the beer and ale department, serving only that brewery's brand. The brewery owns the premises and leases the pub to the operator, who is known as the **landlord** (though he is, legally speaking, the tenant), or **publican**. The pub has its own historic name and a standing or hanging decorative pub sign, sometimes beautifully painted and occasionally ancient, but the effect is somehow a little marred by the appearance of another sign, the name of the brewery, which has the effect of depersonalizing the management. A *free house* is a pub not affiliated with a brewery. It serves whatever brands of ale and beer it chooses. See **tied**; **pub**.

## SEE COMMENT

**free issue of new shares****stock dividend****free line**

You ask your switchboard operator (**telephonist**) for a *free line* when you want to dial the number yourself. In Britain and America, you may request a *line*.

**line****free of**

To make someone *free of* something is to give him the right to use it. A person *free of* a company or a city is one entitled to share in the privileges of membership in

**entitled to the use of**

the company or citizenship in the community. To make someone *free* of your house, car, library, etc. is to allow him the free use of it, to make free of it.

### free-range eggs

### eggs from uncooped hens

As opposed to *battery* eggs. This usage is increasingly common in the U.S.

### freight, *n.*

### cargo

In Britain, *freight*, by itself, is applied to transportation by water or air, though railroads use the terms *freight rates*, *freight sheds*, etc. In America the term is applied to transportation by land or by air, and *cargo* is the marine term. See also **forward; goods**.

### French beans

### string beans

### French toast

SEE COMMENT

A delicious morsel of bread buttered on one side and toasted on the other. Simple enough to concoct, but never met with in America, where *French toast* is bread soaked in a mixture of eggs and milk, fried, and eaten with syrup or molasses or sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar. *Fried bread* is also heard in Britain. All you do is fry it in butter. Try it! The cholesterol alone is worth the price of admission.

### fresh butter

### sweet butter

Unaugmented by salt, that is.

### fresher, *n.*

### approx. freshman

*Slang*. A British university term and a little more restricted than *freshman*. *Freshman* applies to the entire first year; *fresher* normally covers only the first term. *Freshman* (despite its second syllable) and *fresher* apply to both sexes.

### fret, *n.*

### *Slang*. tizzy

*Inf*. People, when agitated, *fret* in both countries. The word is used as a noun in Britain in the expression *in a fret* in situations where Americans would be apt to say *in a tizzy*.

### fridge, *n.*

### refrigerator

*Inf*. Also spelled *frig*, but always pronounced *fridge*, the universal term in Britain for *refrigerator* or *icebox*.

### friendly, *n.*

### approx. *Inf*. exhibition game

*Inf*. Adjective used as a substantive with *match* understood. It means a game the result of which is not reflected in any official record and has no effect on championships.

### friendly action

### action for a declaratory judgment

A legal term, meaning a lawsuit brought to get a point decided, rather than for money damages or other relief.

**friendly society**

A common and extremely useful type of organization, even in an advanced welfare society. Its members are pledged to provide assistance to one another in old age, in illness, and in similar situations.

**mutual insurance group**

**Friendship Town.** See **twin with . . .**

**frig about**

*Slang.* **mess around**

*Slang.* The British use *frig* also in the sense *waste time* common in America. See also **fossick**.

**frightfully, adv.**

*Inf.* **awfully; very**

*Inf.* A word of the privileged but it hangs on tenaciously, and not only among the genteel.

**frillies, n. pl.**

*Inf.* **undies**

*Inf.* Out of fashion—the word, that is.

**fringe, n.**

**bangs**

Coiffure term.

**Fringe Theatre.** See under **West End**.

**frock, n.**

**dress**

Among older people in Britain the everyday word for a *woman's dress*. Common among people of all ages for little girls' dresses. Note that misbehaving clergymen may be *unfrocked*, while misbehaving ladies get themselves *undressed*.

**frock-coat, n.**

**Prince Albert**

A long, double-breasted frock coat.

**from the off**

**from the word go**

Somewhat old-fashioned, but still used jocularly.

**front, n.**

**seaside promenade**

Referring to seaside places, and also called *sea front*. A *front* or *sea front* is like an American *boardwalk*, except that the walking surface is not made of wood. People in Britain do not talk about going to the *beach* or *shore*; they go to the *sea-side*.

**front bench**

SEE COMMENT

Describes the benches in the House of Commons and the House of Lords occupied by **ministers** (*cabinet members*) and other members of the government and members of the opposition **shadow** cabinet. Those who occupy them are *front-benchers*. See also **back bench**.

**frontier, n.**

**border**

The word means *border between nations* in both countries, but in Britain it does not have the special meaning of the part of the country that forms the outer limit of its populated area. In view of Britain's history, it is understandable that the connotation, having had no application for so long a period, would now be lost.

**frost, n.****Slang. bust**

*Slang.* If an American went to a party that he would later describe as a *bust* (or a *dud*), his English counterpart would have characterized it as a *frost*.

**frosted food****frozen food**

Sign in Harrods, the great store in London: FROSTED FOODS. A refrigerator salesman (**shop assistant in a fridge shop**) would point with pride to a large *frosted foods compartment*, which Americans would call a *freezer*.

**frowsty, adj.****stuffy**

*Inf.* *Frowst* is a British colloquialism meaning the 'fusty stale heat in a room.' From this colloquial word we get *frowsty*, which describes the way the unfortunate room smells. *Frowsty* is related to the adjective *frowzy*, also spelled *frouzy* in America, which means 'close,' in the sense of 'musty,' 'fusty,' and 'smelly,' and by association 'dingy.' But nowadays in either country it is also commonly used in the sense of 'unkempt.'

**frowzy. See frowsty.****fruiterer, n.****fruit merchant**

The *fruiterer's* is a *fruit store*. Not to be confused with *fruiter*, which covers *fruit bearing tree*, *fruit-ship*, and *fruit-grower*. See also **costermonger; greengrocer's**.

**fruit machine****Slang. slot machine**

*Slang.* A one-armed bandit. What you get out of a fruit machine in Britain is either exhilaration or despair. *Slot machine* is the British term for what Americans call a *vending machine*.

**fruity, adj. Inf.****Inf. spicy; sexy****fry-up, n.****approx. fry**

A *fry* in America is any fried dish, or more generally a social function involving the eating of a fried dish (e.g., *fish-fry*; cf. *clambake*). In Britain it is a concoction of fried kippers, eggs, potatoes, and anything else available.

**fubsy, adj.****fat and squat****fug, n.****stuffiness (room)**

*Inf.* In addition to this noun meaning, *fug* sometimes appears as a verb. To *fug* is to like to have it stuffy, in a room, a car, or any other enclosure.

**(in) full fig****Slang. all decked out**

In full dress.

**full marks****full approval**

*Inf.* I give him full marks for that! or Full marks to him! expresses the appreciation of a performance beyond criticism.

**full out****complete**

In both countries *full out* can also indicate *at full power* and maximum speed, *full throttle*.

**(a) full plate. See have enough on one's plate.**

**full stop****period**

The British never use *period* for the dot at the end of a sentence, though they generally understand this American usage. Americans avoid *stop* except in dictating telegram and cable messages. *Full stop* is peculiarly British except that Americans do sometimes use it when reading printed proof aloud.

**fully booked.** See **book.**

**fully found****all expenses paid**

*Salary £15, fully found* means that you get £15 per week, and all expenses, like transportation, board and lodging, and so on. *All found* is also used.

**funeral furnisher****undertaker**

Americans have their euphemisms too. Consider *mortician*.

**funky, adj.***Slang.* **chicken**

*Slang.* This word is used much more commonly in Britain than in America. The noun *funk* has one meaning in Britain which it does not have in America: 'coward.' *You're a funk* would be *you're chicken* in America. The adjective *funky* is not commonly used in America in this sense.

**funniosity, n.****a gag**

In Britain a jocular term for anything that makes one laugh.

**fun of the fair.** See **all the fun of the fair.**

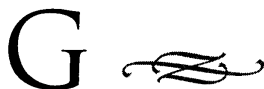
**furnishings, soft.** See **soft furnishings.**

**Furry Dance**

An ancient ritualistic folk dance, seen these days only at Helston in Cornwall on certain days of the year; also called the **Floral Dance**, and pronounced as though it rhymed with HURRY (U as in BUT).

**fuss, v.t., Inf.****agitate**

**fuzz.** See **in a fuzz.**



**gadzookery.** See **Wardour Street.**

**gaff, n.**

*Slang, honky-tonk*

*Slang.* Sometimes *penny gaff*. An entirely different British use is seen in the slang expression *blow the gaff*, which means 'spill the beans.' An American slang use is found in *stand the gaff*, where *gaff* means 'strain' or 'rough treatment.' None of these *gaffs* has anything to do with *gaffe*, from the French, meaning *faux pas*.

**gaffer, n.**

**1. old duffer**

**2. boss**

1. With the implication of the countryside, and humorously affectionate rather than in any sense pejorative.

2. When used by a gang of unskilled laborers, *the gaffer* means the 'man in charge,' the 'boss' of the gang, the 'foreman,' and, if anything, is mildly pejorative, without the slightest trace of humor or affection. But the expression *good gaffer* has been used to describe a *good boss*. And *gaffer* is sometimes used as schoolboy slang for 'headmaster,' a special kind of boss. In the U.S., the *gaffer* is the senior electrician on a film unit.

**gain on swings, lose on roundabouts**

*Inf. you win some, you lose some*

*Inf.* Or, *gain on roundabouts, lose on swings*. The *roundabouts* in question are *merry-go-rounds* (see **roundabout, 2.**) and the expression is taken from the playground scene. It expresses resignation to the approximate effect that *you can't win 'em all*; there are pros and cons to most of life's decisions. Perhaps *six of one and a half a dozen of the other*.

**gall, n.**

**rancor**

In Britain *gall* (apart from its medical implications) is also slang for *impudence* or *effrontery*, as it is in America.

**gallon, n.** See **Appendix II.C.2.a.**

**gallop, n.**

**bridle trail**

**gallows, n. pl.**

**gallows tree**

**galoshes, n. pl.**

**rubbers**

In America *galoshes* are *overshoes*, waterproof boots that are worn over shoes and reach to about the ankle. They would be called *snowboots* in Britain, though *galoshes* is sometimes used by Britons in the American sense. See also **Wellingtons; boot; gumboots; snowboots.**

**game, n.**

**kind of thing**

*Inf.* *Game* is much used in Britain in a variety of phrases and a variety of ways. A man says to his much-divorced friend who is contemplating another plunge, *I*

*should think you'd have enough of that game! A mug's game* (see **mug**) is something for the birds, an activity that only a fool would engage in. *I wonder what her game is* means *I wonder what she's up to i.e., what's her angle?* *Play the game* means 'do the right thing.' *On the game* means 'living as a prostitute.' *She's on the game* means 'She's a whore.' See also **Stuff that for a game of soldiers!**

**game, v.i.**

**gamble**

Americans speak jocularly of the *gaming table*, but rarely if ever use the verb *game*. The verb is still heard in Britain, where *gaming* is the preferred euphemism for *gambling*, as in America.

**gammon, n.**

**ham**

**gammon, n., v.t., v.i.**

**humbug**

*Inf. Nonsense* intended to deceive. The verb, used intransitively, means to 'engage in talking humbug'; transitively, to *gammon* someone is to *pull his leg, put him on*. Slang of a bygone day. But see **humbug**, which has nothing to do with any of this.

**gammy, adj.**

**lame; game**

*Slang.* Usually in the expression *gammy leg*, meaning 'game leg.' An arm may be *gammy* as well.

**gamp, n.**

**umbrella**

*Inf.* A big one, named after Sarah Gamp, in *Martin Chuzzlewit*, a bibulous lady who carried a large cotton umbrella. The common slang term in Britain is **broolly**.

**gang.** See **breakdown gang; navvy.**

**ganger, n.**

**gang foreman**

In charge of a gang of workers. Often applies to a foreman in charge of men working on the railroad.

**gangway, n.**

**aisle**

In theaters, ships, stores and in the House of Commons. Americans, of course, have gangways here and there, but have aisles everywhere you look. See also **aisle** for an especially British sense of the word.

**garden n.**

*approx.* **yard**

*Garden* is used, in its literal sense, the same way in both countries. But the British use *garden* to refer to one's property outside his house, the way Americans use *yard*. Also, the British often use *garden* as a synonym for *lawn*; *How nice your garden looks!* may be said of your *lawn* even when there isn't a single flower showing.

**garibaldi, n.**

**currant cookie**

*Inf.* The popular name of this hard rectangular cookie (**biscuit**) is *squashed fly* (jocular, if just the least bit unappetizing). The old **public school** name for them was *fly cemeteries*. Garibaldi was a 19th century Italian patriot. The *garibaldi*, otherwise, used to be the name for a sort of loose blouse worn in the mid 1800s by women and children in imitation of the garb worn by Garibaldi's soldiers.

**gash, n., adj.**

**1. n. waste; garbage**

**2. adj. superfluous; extra**

**3. adj. free**

**gasper, n.***Slang.* The preferred slang term is **fag**.**cheap cigarette****gate, v.t.***Inf.* That is, to punish by confinement. To be *gated* is to be *confined to college* (see **college**) during certain hours, or in some cases entirely, for a certain period, varying with the severity of the offense committed. The principal aspect of the punishment is the interruption of one's evening social life.**confine to quarters****gaudy, n.**Oxford college alumni dinner and celebration. From *gaudium*, Latin for 'joy' and *gaudeo*, 'rejoice,' whence *Gaudeamus igitur, juvenes dum sumus* "Let us therefore rejoice while we are young." Literally, *gaudy* means any feast, but it is usually understood in the narrower sense.

SEE COMMENT

**Gawdelpus, n.***Slang.* An exasperating person; intentional mispronunciation of *God-help-us*. Synonymous with **Gawdf'bid**, which was originally cockney rhyming slang (see **Appendix III.G.3**) for *kid*, i.e., *child*, the kind known as a *little terror*.*Slang. pain in the ass***Gawdf'bid.** See **Gawdelpus**.**gazette, v.t.**There are three official journals for the publication of official notices in the United Kingdom: the *Belfast Gazette*, *Edinburgh Gazette*, and *London Gazette*. They come out twice a week with official public notices of such things as government appointments, bankruptcies, etc. To *gazette* something is to have it published in one of these publications.

SEE COMMENT

**gazump, v.t.***Slang.* The accent is on the second syllable. To *jack up* the price of a piece of real estate after the asking price has actually been met, just before the contract is signed. This current usage to describe such unworthy methods appeared first in the spelling *gazoomph*, and was derived from the more general meaning of the term *gazumph* (*gezumph*) which covers the various kinds of swindling that go on at dishonest auctions.*Inf. jack up***G.C.E.**Stands for *General Certificate of Education*. See under **A-levels**. G.C.E. is quite different from the General Equivalency Diploma in that it requires a certain number of years spent in school.approx. **GED****gear, adj.***Slang.* A teenage term.*Slang. cool***gearbox, n.**Automotive term. See also **Appendix II.E**.**transmission****gearing, n.****leverage****gear-lever, n.**See also **Appendix II.E**.**gearshift**

**gee**, *interj.*

*Inf.* **horsie**

*Inf.* **Gee!** and **gee-up!** are used in both countries to urge a horse on. In Britain **gee-ho!**, and **gee-wo!** are heard, too, and **gee-gee** was originated by children as a juvenile colloquialism equivalent to **horsie**. The **gee-gees** is used jocularly in the way the Americans say *the ponies*, i.e., *the horses*, as in the expression *play the ponies*.

**gefuffle**. See **kerfuffle**.

**gen**, *n.*

*Slang.* **inside dope**

*Slang.* (Pronounced JEN.) **Gen** is short for *general information*, and like so many slang expressions, started in the armed forces. *Duff gen* means 'bum dope,' 'misleading information.' See **gen up**; **griff**.

**general election**

**countrywide election**

The election of members of the House of **Commons** (Members of Parliament, usually shortened to *M.P.s*) throughout the country. This must take place at least every five years but can be brought on sooner by the resignation of the Prime Minister and his (or her) Government, normally as the result of a defeat in the House of Commons, whereupon there would be a dissolution of the incumbent Government. See also **go to the country**.

**general meeting**. See **Annual General Meeting**.

**general post**

*approx.* **circulation**

A mass changing of places, as at a party where the guests are just sitting around. The hostess suggests a *General Post!* meaning that the guests should start moving around, circulating. Appears to be derived from the children's game of Post Office, which involved complex rules determining who kissed whom. The expectation is that under *general post* everybody kisses everybody else.

**General Post Office**. See **G. P. O.**

**general servant**

**maid of all work**

*Inf.* Sometimes informally shortened to *general*.

**gentle**, *n.*

**maggot**

As used for fishing bait.

**gentry**, *n. pl.*

SEE COMMENT

In position and birth, the class just below the nobility. See **landed**, 3.

**gen up**

1. *Inf.* **fill in**

2. *Slang.* **bone up**

1. *Slang.* To fill (someone) in, in the sense of 'putting (him) in the know.'

2. *Slang.* To acquire the necessary information about someone or something before taking a step. See also **gen**.

**geography of the house**

**location of the john**

*Inf.* A considerate host in an expansive mood may ask a guest, under appropriate circumstances, "Do you know the geography of the house?" A guest unfamiliar with the layout might elicit the same information through the use of the same euphemism. Cf. *have a wash*, under **wash**, and **wash up**. Said to be **non-U**. For a discussion of *non-U* see **Appendix I.C.6**.

**Geordie**, *n., adj.*

SEE COMMENT

Native of Tyneside. Also the dialect they speak in that part of northeastern England. In Scotland especially, the term can be applied to any coal miner.

**George**, *n.*

**automatic airplane pilot**

*Slang.* Believed by some to have been derived from the old saying *Let George do it.*

**get.** See **git.**

**get across (someone)**

*Inf.* **get (someone) riled up**

*Inf.* The British as well as the Americans also speak of *getting a person's goat.*

**get a duck.** See **duck, 1.**

**get a rocket.** See **rocket.**

**get knotted!**, *Slang.*

*Slang.* **stop bugging me!**

**get much change out of**

*Inf.* **get anywhere with**

*Inf.* These expressions (in their respective countries) are almost always in the negative. When a Briton says, "He didn't get much change out of me," he is saying, in the American idiom, "He didn't get anywhere (or very far) with me." Like **wash** in *That won't wash* or **wear** in *The boss won't wear that for a minute*, *get much change out of* is rarely encountered in the affirmative.

**get off with**

SEE COMMENT

*Slang.* To make progress with a member of the opposite sex, stopping short, however, of what grandmother used to call 'going the limit.' Cf. **have it off, 4**, which includes the attainment of the limit.

**get one's bowler.** See **bowler-hatted.**

**get one's cards.** See **give (someone) his cards.**

**get one's colours**

SEE COMMENT

*Be made a member of a team*, in sports. More specifically, establish one's competence in a sport and earn the right to wear the team colors. To *give (someone) his colours* is to include him or her in a team, usually as a permanent or regular member rather than as a temporary substitute. The Oxford color is dark blue, Cambridge light blue.

**get one's eye in**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* The **batsman** in **cricket** must initially 'feel out' his adversary, the **bowler**, before changing his stance from defensive to aggressive and beginning to make runs. This initial period is known as *getting his eye in* and is more fully explained under **play oneself in.**

**get one's head down.** See **put one's head down.**

**get one's head in one's hand**

*Slang.* **catch hell**

*Slang.* In other words, get your head chopped off and handed to you.

**get one's skates on***Inf. get going**Slang.* Start moving, hurry. In the armed forces, it means 'desert.'**get one's own back on***Inf. get back on**Inf.* That is, *get even with, avenge oneself.* Also, *get something back on.***get on (someone's) wick***Inf. bug (someone)**Slang.* Or, *get on someone's nerves.***get on with****get along with**A different sense from that in which one *gets on with* one's work. It applies to human relations. Also not to be confused with **get on with it!****get on with it! *Inf.****Inf. get going!***get-out, *n.****Inf. out**Inf.* In the sense of evasion, an *avenue of escape*, one's way out of a jam.**get out of it!***Slang. come on!**Slang.* Meaning 'quit your kidding!' Synonymous with **give over!****get stuck in***Inf. get going**Slang.* To *get stuck in again* means to 'resume an interrupted task.' Thus, plotting our next year's vacation together, a friend writes: *I can get stuck in again when the new year's schedules are to hand.* *Get stuck in!* or *get stuck into it!* means 'get going!' or 'quit stalling!' when spectators are exhorting their team, which appears to have slowed up.**get stuffed. See stuff.****get the better of****get the best of**You *get the better of* (*triumph over*) somebody in Britain but the Americans use the superlative. Lest you think Americans always resort to superlatives, the reverse is true in the following sense: an American says, *I'd better leave now*, while his British friend will sometimes say, *I'd best leave now.***get the bird. See give (someone) his cards.****get the chop, *Slang.***1. *Slang. be bumped off (get killed)*2. *Slang. get the gate (be fired)***get the push. See push.****get the stick***Slang. catch hell**Slang.* When a person has been severely criticized, the British say he *got the stick*, *got a lot of stick* or *got a bit of stick.* Derived, presumably, from the vanishing custom of caning schoolchildren for misbehavior. One hears *take the stick* as well.**get the wind up***Inf. be jumpy**Inf.* In a situation where an American is nervous about something, the Briton *gets the wind up* about it. To *have the wind up* is to be 'scared' rather than merely 'nervous.' To *put the wind up* somebody is to 'scare him.' Strangely enough, to *raise the wind* is to *raise the money.* Windy, by itself, means 'nervous' or 'jumpy.'

**getting on for**

*Inf.* Thus: *Getting on for thirty years before, Elsie had married happily.* Or, *It's getting on for one o'clock.*

**well nigh****get upsides with**

*Inf.* To turn the tables on someone, or to *avenge oneself*.

*Inf.* **get even with****get up (someone's) nose, Slang.***Slang.* **get in (someone's) hair****get weaving, Inf.***Inf.* **get going****get your knickers in a twist. See knickers.****geyser, n.****water heater**

*Geyser* is a geological term in both countries denoting a hot spring which shoots up a column of steaming water at fixed intervals. The most famous of these is Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park. But to a Briton the primary meaning of *geyser* is 'water heater,' and the word evokes the image of a smallish white cylindrical tank with a swiveling faucet underneath, located on the wall next to the kitchen sink or in the bathroom. In this specialized meaning, the word is pronounced as though spelled GEEZER. See also **immersion heater**.

**ghastly show. See bad show!****giddy fit, Inf.****dizzy spell****giddy-go-round, n.****merry-go-round**

More commonly **roundabout**. See also **carousel**.

**gig-lamps, n., pl.***Inf.* **specs**

*Slang.* Meaning 'eyeglasses.' *Pebble gig-lamps* are thick ones, *pebble* in this sense being old English for 'natural rock crystal.'

**gill, n.****1. ravine; torrent****2. See Appendix II.C.2.b.**

1. The *g* is hard. Usually a *deep ravine* and wooded. When it means *torrent*, it refers to a *narrow mountain torrent*.

**gilts****government bonds**

Short for *gilt-edged securities*. See also **shares**.

**gin and French; gin and it**

## SEE COMMENT

*It is a comic shortening of Italian Vermouth.* See **martini**.

**gin and Jaguar belt****expensive suburb**

*Inf.* Of London, synonymous with **stockbroker belt**.

**ginger-beer****homosexual**

*Slang.* Rhyming slang for *queer*.

**ginger biscuit, also ginger-nut, n.****gingersnap**

**ginger group***Inf. young Turks*

*Inf.* Any activist group that thinks its own political party or organization is moving too slowly and wants to push it forward or to move ahead on its own.

**ginger-up, n., Inf.***Inf. pep talk*

*Inf.* Without the hyphen, to **ginger up** means 'give a pep talk to.'

**gin-stop, n., Inf.***Inf. gin mill***gippo, n., Slang.****army stew**

And a more tasteful dish is easy to find.

**gippy tummy****diarrhea**

*Slang.* Also spelled *gippie, gyppy, gyppie*. *Gippy* was common British slang for an Egyptian soldier or cigarette. *Gippy tummy* describes what happens to many travelers who visit tropical countries.

**girdle, n.****griddle**

Thus giving rise to *girdle-cakes*, with Vermont maple syrup.

**Girl Guide****Girl Scout**

Boy Scouts are Boy Scouts in both countries, but *Girl Scouts* become *Girl Guides* in Britain.

**Giro, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A system of credit transfer between banks, widely used by the **G.P.O.** (*Post Office*). From *giro*, Italian for *circulation* (of money).

**git, n.***Slang. jerk*

*Slang.* Occasionally *get*, and often coupled with a deprecatory adjective, as in *you silly git . . .*! Synonyms: **poon; swab; twit; jobbernowl; juggins; muggins.**

**give (someone or something) a miss***Inf. pass (something) up*

*Inf.* One *gives a miss* to a play that has had bad notices or a restaurant where one's friends have had a poor experience. One might do the same thing in the case of the fifth wedding of a dear pal: here Americans might say, *I'll sit this one out!* But to *give someone (or something) a miss* doesn't necessarily imply distaste. One can have seen the Tower of London once too often and decide this time to *give it a miss*, despite past happy experiences there. Or, if you've borrowed too often from your friend Tim and have lost again at poker, while you are wondering where to get it this time, you might reflect, *This time I'll give Tim a miss.*

**give (someone) a shout***Inf. call out*

*Inf.* A Briton will promise to *give you a shout* when he is ready, where an American would promise to *let you know*.

**give (someone) best***Inf. bow to (someone)*

*Inf.* To *give somebody best* is to *admit his superiority*, and in that sense to *bow to him*.

**give (someone) fits, Slang.***Slang. give (someone) hell***give (someone) gyp Inf.***Inf. beat*

140 give (someone) his cards

**give (someone) his cards**

*Slang.* **give (someone) his pink slip or his walking papers**

*Slang.* To *fire (someone)*. Synonyms: **give (someone) the bird**; *give (someone) the chop*, which can have the far more sinister meaning of 'bump off' (see **get the chop**). Conversely, to *get one's cards*, *the bird*, or *the chop* is to *be fired* (unless *chop* is being used in the more drastic sense). One can also be said, somewhat wryly, to *collect one's cards*. To *ask for one's cards* is to *give up one's job*, to *resign*.

**give (someone) his colours.** See **get one's colours**.

**give (someone) in**

To *turn a person over to the police*.

**turn (someone) in**

**give in part exchange**

In Britain you *give* your old car *in part exchange* when you buy a new one, in the same way in which you *trade it in* in America.

**trade in; turn in**

**give (someone) out**

A cricket term. The American term is not used. The *someone* in the cricket term is the player who is (in the American term) called out by the umpire after an appeal (see **How's that?**) by the other side. *Give* is thus used in cricket where *call* would be used in baseball.

**call (someone) out**

**give over!**

*Slang.* Synonymous with **get out of it!** Can also mean 'stop it!'

**come on!**

**give (someone) some stick**

*Slang.* A severe dressing-down.

*Slang.* **give (someone) hell**

**give (someone) the bird**

*Slang.* See synonyms under **give someone his cards**.

*Slang.* **give (someone) the hook**

**Give Way**

Road sign in Britain, meaning 'Yield right of way.' In many parts of America there are road signs to the same effect, reading **YIELD**.

**Yield**

**glass, n.**

Referring to watches and clocks. The term *crystal* is used in Britain, too, but only in the trade.

**crystal, lens**

**glass fibre**

**fiberglass**

**glasshouse, n.**

**1. greenhouse**

**2. stockade**

**3. lock-up**

1. The standard meaning.

2. *Military slang.* *Army prison*. The naval equivalent in both countries is *brig*.

3. The term has been extended to mean any sort of detention center, such as those proposed for the confinement and treatment of young offenders.

**glasspaper, n.**

**sandpaper**

**Glaswegian**, *n., adj.*

SEE COMMENT

Of Glasgow. A native or inhabitant of Glasgow.

**G.M.T.****Greenwich mean time****go**, *n.***turn; try**

If a child is demonstrating his new tricycle to his British friend, the friend will, after a certain interval, ask, *May I have a go?* In America, he would ask if he might *try* it or *take a turn*. *Go* is used in Britain also in the sense of 'taking a shot' at something, like a stuck window or something in your eye. When used in America, always accompanied by *at it*: *Have another go at it*.

**go**, *v.t.***bid, declare**

*Inf.* Bridge term. *We went two, partner* means 'we bid two.'

**go a mucker.** See **mucker**.**goat**, *n.***fool**

*Inf.* To act the *goat* or to play the *goat*, or the *giddy goat*, is to play the *fool*.

**gob**, *n.**Slang.* **trap**

*Slang.* Mouth; thus; *Shut your gob!*

**gob**, *v.i.***spit**

*Slang.* Extremely vulgar; only heard from louts.

**gobstopper**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

A large, hard long-lasting sucking candy, so big that it **stops** (*fills*) one's **gob**.

**go down.** See **come down**.**gods**, *n.**Inf.* **(peanut) heaven; peanut gallery**

*Inf.* The *gallery* of a theater, the part nearest heaven.

**go for six****get smashed**

*Slang.* Describes the accidental destruction of breakable ornaments around the house, like porcelain objets d'art, as the result of careless dusting and the like.

**goggle-box**, *n.**Slang.* **boob tube; idiot box**

*Slang.* In both countries affectionately perjorative terms have been invented for the television set.

**going spare***Slang.* **on the loose**

*Slang.* Referring to girls who are available, easy to get. But see **go spare**.

**golden duck.** See **duck**, 1.**golden handshake****dismissal with bonus**

Payment to executives who are let go with a generous severance allowance.

**goloshes.** See **galoshes**.

**go missing,** *Inf.*

**disappear**

**go nap.** See **nap**.

**gone,** *v.i.*

*approx.* **become; turned**

Used in expressions of time, like *It had gone four o'clock by the time Frank arrived*. Americans would say *It was after four when Frank arrived*. More generally, in expressions other than those of time, the American equivalent would be *turned*, for example, in an expression of this sort: *The Dead Sea Scrolls had gone all black (had all turned black)*. See also **just going**.

**gone for a burton**

*Slang.* **kicked the bucket**

*Slang.* Originally Royal Air Force slang perhaps referring to Burton ale, describing the men who failed to return from the mission. Now applied to less serious situations, like a broken glass. See **go for six**.

**gongs,** *n. pl.*

*Slang.* **medals**

*Slang.* Humorous service terms for *medals*; jocular, affectionate military slang, with the accent on understatement and self-deprecation. *Ribbons* are *fruit salad* in American slang.

**good innings**

**long run**

*Inf.* One who has had a *good innings* (**innings** is treated as singular in Britain) has had a *good long life*, or a *good spell* of something, like a term of office.

**good in parts**

**good and bad**

For origin see **curate's egg**.

**good job**

*Inf.* **good thing**

*Inf.* As in *Good job it didn't rain during the picnic*.

**good party?**

*Inf.* **how'd it go?**

*Slang.* Asked of someone returning from a mission.

**goods,** *n. pl.*

**freight**

A railroad term. A *goods-waggon* is a *freight car*. See also **freight; forward**.

**good show!** *Inf.*

*Inf.* **nice work!**

**good value**

*Inf.* **good stuff**

*Inf.* Thus: *That lad is very good value*.

**go off,** *Inf.*

**get tired of**

**go off the boil**

**quiet down**

*Inf.* Said, for instance, of an official inquiry that starts off like a house afire but turns out to be only a nine-day wonder.

**goolies,** *n. pl.*

*Slang.* **balls**

*Slang.* Also spelled *ghoulies*, and largely forgotten.

**gooseberry, n.***approx. Inf. fifth wheel*

*Inf.* The superfluous third party who sticks like glue to the (un)happy couple who are aching to be alone. To *play gooseberry* is to *act as chaperon*. All this has nothing to do with *gooseberry*, the fruit, or *gooseberry fool*, the dessert.

**goosegog, n.****gooseberry**

*Inf.* A common jocular corruption of the fruit *gooseberry*. *Goosegog eyes* are watery eyes, reminding one of *gooseberries*.

**go racing****go to the races****gormless, adj. Inf.****lacking sense****go spare, Slang.****1. Slang. get sore (angry)****2. be baffled****3. Slang. go AWOL**

But see **going spare**; and see **send (someone) spare**.

**Go to Bath! Slang.***Slang. don't talk nonsense*

Insane people formerly were sent to Bath to be cursed by its mineral waters.

**go to bed****have sexual intercourse****go to ground***Inf. lie low*

*Inf. Hide out*; from fox hunting, when the pursued beast takes to its lair.

**go to the bad, Inf.***Inf. go to the dogs***go to the country****have a general election**

General elections (for **Members** of Parliament) are held every five years. The Government, however, can resort to a general election short of that time in order to test public opinion, usually in case of a crisis, and must do so if it loses its majority in the **Commons**.

**goulash, n.**

*Slang.* Bridge term: dealing the next hand without shuffling, so as to produce extraordinary hands.

**go up****enter university**

*Inf.* Be admitted to a higher institution.

**government, n.****administration**

The British talk about the *Blair government*, the Americans about the *Bush administration*. Each phrase refers to the people ruling the country at the moment.

**governor, n.****1. warden****2. Slang. boss; mister; dad**

1. Head person at a prison.

2. *Slang.* A British worker might speak of his *boss* as his *governor* and would address the person that way. A cab driver in Britain might well address a passenger as *guv'nor*, equivalent to the American *doc* or *mister*. Old-fashioned Britons may still use *guv'nor* in the sense of *dad*.

**gownsmen.** See **town and gown.**

**G.P.O.**

SEE COMMENT

Stands for *General Post Office*, which handles the mail, telegrams, old age pension payments, as well as maintaining savings accounts and a credit transfer system known as **Giro**. Nothing to do with **general post**.

**grace and favour**

SEE COMMENT

Describing a residence occupied rent-free by permission of the royal family, like a cottage within the area of Kensington Palace grounds, or the residence of the person in charge of the **race-course** at Ascot, which was established by the sovereign in 1711.

**gradient, n.**

**grade (hill)**

*Gradient* can mean 'grade' or 'slope' in America, too, but it is not as commonly used. *Gradient* would be the more common term in Britain as, for instance, in an automobile instruction book advising which gear to use when starting up a hill.

**graduate, n.**

**college graduate**

In America a *graduate* can refer to a person who has completed the course at any school, whether elementary school, high school, or college. Used alone, *graduate* in Britain means one who has been graduated from university, or what Americans would call a *college graduate*. See also **university man**.

**graft, v.i. Slang.**

**knock oneself out**

**grammar school.** See under **eleven plus**.

**gramophone, n.**

**phonograph**

**granary bread**

SEE COMMENT

A delicious dark bread. They remove most of the roughage, refine some of it, and put the refined part and some of the unrefined part back into the dough.

**granny waggon, Slang.**

*Slang.* **jalopy**

**grasp the nettle, Inf.**

*Inf.* **take the bull by the horns**

Grab a nettle sometime and see what courage is required to do so.

**grass, v.i.**

*Slang.* **squeal (inform)**

*Slang.* This word is derived from cockney rhyming slang (see **Appendix II.G.3**) *grasshopper*, meaning 'copper,' i.e., *policeman*. *Grass* sometimes appears as a noun, meaning both 'informer' or 'stool pigeon' and the 'act of informing' itself.

**gratuity, n.**

**veteran's bonus**

Government bonus to war veterans; a special British usage, in addition to meanings shared with America.

**grease-proof paper**

*approx.* **waxed paper**

Not quite the same but generally serving the same functions. The British variety comes not in rolls but in sheets, is more nearly opaque, heavier, and stiffer.

**greasy, adj.**

*Slippery* generally, not only because of the presence of grease. A wet road or a lawn tennis court after a sudden shower would be described as *greasy*. The same distinction exists in the figurative sense; be just as careful of dealing with a *greasy* Briton as with a *slippery* American. Americans also use *oily* in the same uncomplimentary sense.

**slippery****Great Bear**

Other British names for the *Big Dipper*: *Charles's Wain*, the *Plough*.

**Big Dipper****Greats, n. pl.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf. Oxford classics finals.* *Greats* refer to the B.A. course of study as well as to the exams, and the course includes philosophy in addition to classical literature and history. See also **moderations**; **responsions**; **smalls**.

**Great War**

Not heard much any more because of World War II. Britons now often call it 'World War I.'

**World War I****green belt***approx. no-building zone*

The *green belt* is the area around a British municipality that is kept green, i.e., where building and development are not allowed, lest the overpopulated Britain develop into one megalopolis.

**green card**

SEE COMMENT

Insurance card covering British motorists in foreign countries.

**green fingers, Inf.***Inf. green thumb*

Skill in raising plants.

**greengrocer's, n.****fruit and vegetable store**

See also **fruiterer**; **costermonger**.

**Green Paper.** See under **Paper**.

**green pound**

SEE COMMENT

A unit of value applicable to British transactions in connection with the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Economic Community, commonly known as the Common Market. The use of the *green pound* may make food imports from Common Market countries cheaper for the British consumer, and conversely, British food exports to those countries harder to sell.

**greens, spring.** See **spring greens**.

**Gretna Green**

SEE COMMENT

A small village in Dumfriesshire, Scotland, near the border with England, where runaway young couples from England could be married according to Scottish law by a simple declaration before witnesses, made to a **landlord**, toll-keeper, blacksmith, etc. When the blacksmith officiated, the couple were said to be 'married over the anvil.' In 1856, a law was enacted which impeded impulsive couples by requiring residence in Scotland of one of the parties for a minimum of 21 days before the ceremony. In 1940, marriage by declaration was abolished by

Scottish law, but the place still attracts young couples because minors may marry there without parental consent.

**grid, n.**

**map reference system**

The *National Grid*, a metric system of vertical and horizontal lines superimposed on the map of Britain, divides it into lettered squares with numbered subdivisions, providing a reference system for all regional maps.

**griff, n.**

*Slang. inside dope; info*

*Slang.* Synonymous with **gen**: originally navy slang, and thought to be derived from *griffin* (meaning 'tip on the horses,' or, more generally, 'hint'), which became World War II slang for 'warning,' in the phrase *give the griffin*.

**griffin.** See **griff**.

**grig, n.**

**small eel**

The other meanings, 'grasshopper' or 'cricket,' and figuratively a 'lively person,' are American as well as British. *Merry* (or *happy*) *as a grig* is a common phrase equivalent to *gay and lively*, *bright and merry*, *happy as a lark*.

**grill, v.t.**

**broil**

A lady who asks a British butcher for a *broiler* might get a chicken, but if she wants to be sure to get a chicken for broiling, she should ask for a *grilling-chicken*. See also **chicken**.

**grills, n. pl.**

**steaks and chops**

GRILLS (from *grill* meaning to 'broil') is a common British restaurant sign and is the equivalent of *steaks and chops*. This usage is found in both countries in the term *mixed grill*.

**grind, n.**

1. *Slang. drag*

2. *Slang. lay*

1. *Slang.* In the sense of a boring task, not person; usually in the expression *a bit of a grind*. *Grind*, in America, implies *tough going*

2. *Slang.* A crude word usually used pejoratively in the British phrase *not much of a grind*, i.e., an unsatisfactory sexual partner.

**grinder, n.**

**crammer**

To *grind*, in the sense of 'study hard,' is common to both countries; also to *cram*, in the sense of 'preparing intensively for a particular examination.' But where Americans would describe as a *crammer* one who waits until the last moment to *bone up* (**mug** or *mug up* in Britain), the British call him a *grinder*. See **crammer's** for British use of the word.

**grip, hair.** See **hair grip**.

**grip, kirby.** See **kirby grip**.

**griskin, n.**

**lean bacon**

More particularly, the *lean part of the loin*.

**grit, n.****fine gravel**

A *gritting truck* or **lorry** is a *sanding truck*. GRIT FOR ICE, a roadside sign, offers sand to motorists in need of traction. *Gritting truck* or *lorry* is sometimes shortened to *gritter*.

**grizzle, v.i., Slang.****whimper****grotty, adj.***approx. Slang. cruddy*

*Slang.* A *grotty little schoolboy* pinched her **knickers**. This is a *grotty little restaurant*—look at the stains on the table-cloths. From *grotesque*. See also **ropy; tatty; tinpot**.

**ground, n.****field**

A sports area: a cricket *ground*, a **football ground** (or **pitch**), etc.

**ground, spare.** See **spare ground**.**ground floor.** See **first floor**.**ground-nut, n.****peanut**

Synonymous with **monkey-nut**.

**group of companies****conglomerate**

The term (*So-and-So*) *Group of Companies* (seen on signs, letterheads, etc.) indicates a *conglomerate*.

**Grundyism.** See under **wowser**.**guard, n.****1. conductor; brakeman****2. stopper**

1. A railroad term. *Conductor* is used in Britain to mean the official in charge of passengers on a bus.

2. Term used in contract bridge.

**guard dog****watchdog****Guards, n. pl.**

SEE COMMENT

Also known as *household troops* (comprising the regiments of Foot Guards, Horse Guards and Life Guards), part of whose duty is to attend the sovereign ceremonially. A member of any of these regiments is known as a *guardsman*. See **Life Guard**.

**guardsman.** See **Guards**.**guard's van****caboose**

See under **brake-van**.

**gubbins, n. pl.****1. innards****2. Slang. thingamajigs**

1. *Slang.* The *insides* of something: the *gubbins* of a car—all the bits and pieces mechanics have to get at.

2. *Slang.* Also used as a vague reference to any old junk, equivalent to *thingamajigs* or *whatchamacallits*.

**guffy.** See **jolly.**

**guggle, v.i.**

**gurgle**

The British use *gurgle*, too. *Guggle* appears to be pejorative, as applied to a person in a state of impotent rage or hysterics.

**guide dog**

**Seeing Eye dog**

**guildhall, n.**

**town hall; city hall**

The *Guildhall* in the **City** of London is what Americans would call the *City Hall* if London were an American city. In other municipalities, whether town or city, the British use the expression *town hall* rather than *city hall* to refer to the municipal office building.

**guillotine, n., v.t.**

**1. cloture**

**2. limit by cloture**

1. *Inf.* Limitation of debate in Parliament by fixing the times at which specific parts of a bill must be voted on.

2. *Inf.* The act of thus limiting debate.

**guinea, n**

SEE COMMENT

Formerly a coin worth one pound, one shilling. The *guinea* was originally a gold coin created for use in the African trade. It was theoretically pegged at twenty shillings (the same as the pound) but after a certain degree of fluctuation was fixed at twenty-one shillings. *The Guineas* is the familiar name of two of the five classic British horse races, all for three-year-olds, consisting of the *One Thousand Guineas* and the *Two Thousand Guineas*, both run at Newmarket in Suffolk each April. The other three are the Derby (pronounced DARBY), run at Epsom Downs in Surrey on the first Wednesday of June, the Oaks, also at Epsom the following Friday, and the St. Leger at Doncaster in Yorkshire each September.

**(a) guinea to a gooseberry**

*Inf.* **ten to one**

*Inf.* **Long odds.**

**gum, n.**

**mucilage**

A stickum. If you want something to chew, ask for *chewing gum*.

**gumboots, n. pl.**

**rubber boots**

See also **snowboots; Wellingtons; boot; galoshes.**

**gump, n.**

*Slang.* **horse sense**

*Inf.* Short for *gumption*, common sense.

**gum tree.** See **up a gum tree.**

**gun, n.**

**hunter**

A *member of a shooting party* in Britain where they **shoot**, rather than *hunt*, game birds. See **shoot.**

**gut, n.**

**river bend**

At Oxford and Cambridge, referring especially to narrow passages in the boat-race course.

**gutter-crawl**, *v.i.*

*Slang.* **Crawl** is used by the British the way Americans use *cruise* to indicate the slow driving of a car. *Gutter-crawl* describes the nasty conduct of a motorist on the prowl for women foolish enough to accept an invitation to hop in. **Kerbside-crawl** is synonymous. (*Kerb* is spelled *curb* in America.)

**guy**, *n., v.t., v.i.*

1. *n., Slang.* **fright; sight**

2. *n., Slang.* **slip (vanishing act)**

3. *v.t.* **ridicule**

1. *n., Slang.* As a noun it means a 'grotesquely dressed person' in such a weird getup that American or British onlookers would call him a *fright*, a *sight*, a *scarecrow*, or something of that sort. Literally, a *guy* is a *scarecrow* of a special sort: a limp, shapeless bundle of rags often propped up against walls, wearing frightful masks and caps, surrounded by street-urchins begging a *penny* or *alms* for the *guy*. The word is derived from Guy Fawkes and his famous, thwarted gunpowder plot to blow up King James I, the Prince of Wales, and all the Members of Parliament on November 5, 1605.

2. *n., v.t., v.i., Slang.* In the British slang expression *give the guy* to someone, *guy* means 'slip' and to *do a guy* is to 'perform a vanishing act.' As an intransitive verb (*slang*), to *guy* means to 'take it on the lam,' i.e., to 'decamp.'

3. *v.t., Slang.* As a transitive verb, to *guy* is to *exhibit in effigy* and by extension, to *make a monkey of*, i.e., to *ridicule*.

**gymkhana**, *n.*

**horse show**

This peculiar word is occasionally used in America to mean a 'sports car meet.' Technically, it refers to any public sports field or sports meet.

**gym shoes**

**sneakers**

See also **plimsolls**.

**gym slip (gym tunic)**

**gym suit**

**gym vest**

**T-shirt**

Old-fashioned. *T-shirt* is far more common now. See also **singlet**.

**gyp**, *n.*

**college servant**

This is a special term restricted to the universities of Cambridge and Durham. The same functionary is called a *skip* at Trinity College, Dublin, and a *scout* at Oxford.

**gyp, gives me.** See **gives (someone) gyp**.

# H

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**haar**, *n.*

Cold sea fog on the east coast of England and Scotland.

**sea mist**

**haberdashery**, *n.*

In America a *haberdashery* is a men's outfitter. In Britain it is one of those shops that sell pins, needles, thread, tapes, and a little of this and a little of that. Nowadays the term is used mainly to describe the merchandise sold in such establishments, and, increasingly, in the haberdashery departments of department stores. See also **draper's shop**; **fancy goods**.

**notions store**

**had for a mug**. See **mug**, 1.

**haggis**, *n.*

A popular English dish until the 18th century, now considered specially Scottish; made of the heart, liver, and lungs of a sheep, minced and mixed with oatmeal, suet, and seasoning, and then boiled in the sheep's stomach.

SEE COMMENT

**hairdresser's**, *n.*

The British term is used for both types of establishment, but nowadays the British male usually talks of going to the *barber*; the female, to the *hairdresser*.

**1. barber shop**

**2. beauty parlor**

**hair grip**

Also *hair-slide* and *kirby grip*.

**hairpin**; **bobby pin**

**half**, *adv.*

In expressions of time, e.g., *half twelve*, meaning 'half past twelve.' *Half eleven* means 'half past eleven.' Note that *half after* is American, as is *quarter of*, which in Britain is always *quarter to*.

**half past**

**(a) half**, *n.*

A half pint of beer. Form of address to a **publican**. See also **(the) other half**.

SEE COMMENT

**(not) half**. See **not half**.

**half-and-half**, *n.*

But some **publicans** say it can mean 'mild and bitter' mixed, so that when a customer who is not a regular asks for one, it is wise to request a fuller description.

**ale and stout mixed**

**half a tick**, *Slang*.

**half a minute (right away)**

**half-cock**. See **at half-cock**.

**half-day**, *n.*

Day of the week on which shops close for the day at 1:00 P.M. See **early closing**.

SEE COMMENT

**half hunter.** See under **hunter**.

**halfpenny, n.**

SEE COMMENT

(Pronounced HAYP'-NY.) The old one was discontinued on August 1, 1969, as a step in the decimalization of the British currency system. (See **Appendix II.A.**) A *halfpenny* or *halfpenny's worth* is what a halfpenny will buy; hence, a very small amount.

**half-term, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Brief **school** vacation. See under **term**.

**half, the other.** See (the) **other half**.

**half-yearly, adj., adv.**

**semiannual; semiannually**

**hall, n.**

**large public room**

In the context of country **gentry**, *hall* refers to the ample residence of a **landed** proprietor in Britain. In British universities a *hall* is a building for student living or teaching, and in British **colleges** a common *dining-room*. When it is equivalent to *passage* as used in America, it means only an 'entrance passage.' In its general sense, *hall* finds its equivalent in the British word **passage**. *Hall* is used in both countries in the names of concert halls, as in Carnegie Hall (New York) and Albert Hall (London).

**hall of residence**

**dormitory**

**Halt, v.i.**

**Stop**

The equivalent of an American *Stop* sign used to be and sometimes still is a British road sign reading HALT, but STOP is now coming into general use. Once in a while *Halt* appears coupled with a place name to indicate a railroad stop in the middle of nowhere, but near the designated place.

**hammer, v.t.**

**declare insolvent**

*Inf.* And suspend from trading. An informal expression in financial circles, to describe the suspension of a brokerage firm unable to meet its commitments. The verb is derived from the London Stock Exchange practice of declaring a person or firm bankrupt with three taps of a gavel or hammer on the rostrum.

**hampton, n.**

*Slang. vulgar.* **prick**

*Slang.* The male member. Shortening of *Hampton Wick*; cockney rhyming slang. See **Appendix II.G.3**. *Wick* is an archaic word meaning 'town' or 'district,' still found in place names like *Hampton Wick*, *Warwick*, etc., and in the word *bailiwick*, the sphere of operations of a bailie (a Scottish magistrate) or a bailiff (a sheriff's officer).

**hand, n.**

**handwriting**

As in *His hand is impossible to decipher; She writes a fine italic hand*.

**hanger, n.**

**hillside woods**

This special British meaning is used to describe a wooded area on the side of a steep hill or mountain.

**hanging matter**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Literally, a capital crime for which hanging was the penalty. Used after a negative, usually in the expression *It's not a hanging matter*, meaning 'It's not all that serious.'

**hang up one's hat***Inf.* **settle down**

*Inf.* The context is matrimonial.

**Hansard, n.**

SEE COMMENT

The name of the official Parliamentary report (analogous to the *Congressional Record*) initiated in 1774 by Luke Hansard (d. 1828) and published until 1889 by Messrs. Hansard; now by *Her Majesty's Stationery Office (HMSO)*. To *Hansardize* (now archaic) was to confront a Member of Parliament with previous statements inconsistent with his most recent utterance.

**ha'p'orth, n.****trifle**

*Inf.* (Pronounced HAY'-P'TH.) Contraction of *halfpenny worth*, as much as one could buy for a halfpenny in the old days (before August 1, 1969, when the old halfpenny was demonetized). Cf. the old adage: *Don't spoil the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar*, i.e., 'Don't be penny-wise and pound-foolish.' See also **halfpenny**; **Appendix II.A.**

**happy as a sandboy***Inf.* **happy as a clam**

*Inf.* The words *at high tide* are often added, and always implied, in the American version. A sandboy sold sand.

**hard, n.****hard labor**

*Slang.* In prison, doing hard time.

**hardbake, n.****almond taffy****hard-baked, adj.****hard-boiled**

The British use both terms interchangeably. Also, *hard-cooked* and *hard-bitten*.

**Hard cheese!***Inf.* **Tough luck!**

*Slang.* meaning *bad luck*. Occasionally, *Hard cheddar!*; *hard lines!*

**hard-cooked, adj.****hard boiled**

Of eggs, not of people.

**hard done by***Inf.* **done dirt**

*Inf.* Ill-used.

**Hard lines!** See **Hard cheese!**

**hare off, Inf.***Slang.* **vamoose**

**hare, put up the.** See **put up the hare.**

**hare, start a.** See **start a hare.**

**Harley Street**

SEE COMMENT

Used synecdochically to denote the British medical profession at its most specialized and most expensive best. On this street the fashionable doctors flourish, while ordinary mortals go along with the **National Health**.

**Harrovian, n., adj.**

SEE COMMENT

Of Harrow; a *Harrovian* is either an inhabitant of Harrow (the town where the famous school is located) or a member of Harrow, the **public school** which takes its name from the town, whether student or graduate (**old boy**). Its playing-fields, together with those of Eton, are said to supply the future leaders of Britain.

**harrow, under the.** See **under the harrow**.

**Harry . . .**

SEE COMMENT

This is a word used in conjunction with another word in slang expressions. Why *Harry*? The only answer obtainable was, Why not? The second word in the combination is usually a corrupt form of a standard word. Thus: *Harry spaggers* is *spaghetti*; *Harry champers* (see **champers**) is *champagne*; *Harry Roughers* is a rough sea and *Harry Flatters* a calm (flat) sea. *Harry Blissington* is quite marvelous, absolutely glorious.

**Hatton Garden****the diamond industry**

*Inf.* The name of the London street where most of the diamond merchants are located is applied colloquially to designate the industry generally.

**hat trick****triple achievement**

*Slang.* Any triple achievement, the bringing off of any series of three successes, like three company acquisitions or a lawyer's winning three cases in a row. In cricket, a bowler took three wickets with three balls, the triumphant bowler was presented with a new *hat*. Americans use *hat trick* when speaking of ice hockey.

**haulm, also halm, n.**

(Rhymes with *hawm*.) A collective noun, meaning the stalks or stems of growing things generally, and especially thatching material. It can be used in a singular sense, too, meaning 'one stem' or 'stalk.'

**have a bash at***Slang.* **take a shot at**

*Slang.* To *have a bash at* something is to *give it a try*. Synonymous with **have a go at**. See **go**.

**have a doss, Slang.***Slang.* **get forty winks****have a down on, Inf.***Inf.* **be down on**

**have a go at.** See **have a bash at**.

**have an early night, Inf.****go to bed early****have a quid each way***Inf.* **bet across the board**

*Inf.* At an American track, you can bet to win, place, or show, or any combination of the two, or all three. Betting on all three in America is called *betting across the board*. In American horse racing, to *place* means to 'come in second,' to *show* to

'come in third.' In British betting, *place* describes any of the first three to come in (or in a race with very few horses entered, either of the first two). At a track in Britain (a **race-course**), if you *have a quid each way* and your horse comes in, you win two bets: the odds on the winner, plus a proportion of those odds. In America if you *bet across the board* and have picked the winner, you win three bets, at descending odds, for win, place, and show, respectively.

### have a read

### be reading

*Inf.* To *have a read* is settling in a comfortable armchair, and the common expression is *have a good read*, i.e., be wholly absorbed in that activity. *The book is a good read* connotes that the book is substantial, entertaining and not too demanding—a phrase now creeping into American reviewers' jargon.

### have a rod in pickle for

### *Inf.* be laying for

To *have a rod in pickle* for someone is to be nursing a grudge and aching to punish him, and waiting to pounce on him at the first opportunity. Presumably, the pickling solution will keep the rod pliable until it is used.

### have a slate loose, *Slang.*

### *Slang.* have a screw loose

The slates, of course, are on one's roof.

### have a time of it.

Synonymous with *have a rare time of it*. See under **rare**.

### have a word with

### speak to

About a particular matter, with the object of accomplishing something. *I'll have a word with him* implies that the speaker is about to try to get something done about something, with a degree of assurance about the outcome.

### have enough on one's plate

### have plenty to do

*Inf.* Often in the expanded form *enough on one's plate as it is*. A *full plate* means the same thing. A form sometimes used is *a lot on one's plate*, which connotes the state of being busy rather than overworked.

### have everything in the shop window. See under **shop**.

### have (someone's) guts for garters

### *Inf.* let (someone) have it

*Slang.* To *give someone the works*: *If the boss hears about this, he'll have my guts for garters*.

### (to) have had one's chips

### *Inf.* (to) have had it

*Slang.* To *be beaten*; *licked*. You've *had your chips*, little man.

### have (something) in one's eye

### *Inf.* have (something) lined up

*Slang.* Referring, for instance, to a better paying job than the one you have now.

### have it off

### 1. *Slang.* pull (bring) it off

### 2. win a bet

### 3. *Slang.* make it

### 4. have an affair

1. *Slang.* Referring to any achievement.

2. *Slang.* At the track, usually.

3. *Slang*. With a girl. Sometimes *have it away*. Both expressions indicate sexual consummation.

4. *Slang*. Intransitive use, referring to either sex.

**have jam on it**

*Inf. have it easy*

*Inf.* To be in clover, be feeling no pain, etc. To want jam on it is to want egg in your beer.

**have no mind to**

*Inf. not care a rap about*

*Inf.* For example, He is so old that he has no mind to basketball.

**have no time for**

*Inf. have no use for; not think much of*

*Inf.* Americans commonly use the expression: *I don't think much of him*, or *I have no use for him*, where the British might say *I have no time for him*. Predictably, to *have a lot of time for* someone is to *have a high opinion of* him.

**have (someone) on, *Inf.***

*Inf. kid (someone)*

**have (something) on, *Inf.***

*Inf. have (something) going*

**have one over the eight**

*Inf. get somewhat tight*

*Inf.* When somebody has *had one over the eight*, he is not terribly drunk but is certainly under the influence. The inference may be that one ought to be able to put away eight pints of beer without effect—no mean feat for the inexperienced beer drinker!

**have (someone) on toast, *Slang.***

**have (someone) at one's mercy**

A marvelous metaphor.

**have (something) put in hand**

*Inf. get (something) under way*

*Inf.* If a Briton needed a secretary, he would mention it to friends, apply to agencies, and the like, and would thus *have* the operation *put in hand*; while an American would *get it under way*.

**haver, *v.i.***

**talk nonsense**

(Pronounced HAY'-VER.) Like **blether**, with which it is synonymous, it is mainly Scottish, and with an -s added becomes a plural noun meaning *nonsense*.

**have square eyes**

**be a television addict**

**have the penny and the bun, *Inf.***

*Inf. have your cake and eat it, too*

**have the pull of. See pull.**

**have the wind up. See get the wind up.**

**have (someone) up**

**bring charges against (someone)**

To bring someone before a court of justice or a government agency.

**Have you been served?**

**Is someone helping you?**

Question asked by a salesperson (shop *assistant*, or simply *assistant*). Sometimes, *Are you being served?*

**head, *n.***

**1. principal; dean**

## 2. top of the bottle

1. *Head* is a shortening of *headmaster* or *headmistress*, both of which terms are used in America where, however, *principal* is the common term in secondary schools and *dean* in colleges. **Dean**, in Britain, usually denotes a church official, although it is sometimes used there in the American sense of a *college* faculty head or department head. *Principal* is seldom seen in Britain in this connection, where its definitions include, only incidentally, *headmaster* (of a *college*).

2. In Britain, the cream still rises to the top of the container and is called the *head*. As in America, the same word also describes the *froth on beer*.

**head boy; head girl**approx. **top boy; top girl**

In British schools generally, below the university level, the headmaster (*principal*), with the recommendations of the **staff** (*faculty*), designates one student as the *head boy* or *head girl*, as the case may be. This fortunate student is the one who has made the best all-round contribution to school life. The title is an honorable one and involves the burden of exemplary conduct with no special privileges except that of leading the cheers on the occasion of the visit of a notable personage.

**headlamp, n.****headlight**See also **Appendix II.E.****headmaster. See head.****headship, n.****office of school principal or college dean****health visitor**approx. **health inspector**

An official of the Health Department of the County Council (see **council**) who visits homes after childbirths, children's clinics, schools, and elderly people to check up and advise on matters of health.

**heaped, adj.****heaping**

Teaspoonful, tablespoon, etc.

**hearty, n.****Slang. jock***Inf.* A university term for an athlete or sportsman; the opposite of an **aesthete**.**heath, n.****wild open land**

Usually covered with shrubs. *The Heath* in London refers to *Hampstead Heath*, a beautiful, very large park in northwest London.

**Heath Robinson****Rube Goldberg**

Applicable to a mechanical contrivance of amusingly superfluous complexity.

**heavy gang****third-degree squad**

*Slang.* Tough police interrogators. The *heavy gang* or *heavy mob* are the rough boys in the force.

**he bought the farm****his plane was shot down**

*Slang.* A very sad bit of R.A.F. argot, for which there would appear to be no American slang equivalent. The expression alludes to the many pilots who were "going to settle down and buy a farm" when the war was all over. In some cases it was all over too soon. *He's bought it* has apparently superseded the longer

phrase, and it can now refer to a premature death as a result of any disaster, like that of a racing driver in flames.

**hedge, n.**

**stone wall**

*Inf.* A special usage. In some cases the wall is level and wide enough to walk on cross-country. Stone walls may take the place of green hedges.

**heel bar**

**while-U-wait shoe repair shop**

**Heinz hound**

**mongrel**

*Slang.* Alluding to the 57 varieties of breeds found among its forebears.

**helter-skelter, n.**

**carnival slide**

*Inf.* Upon payment of a small fee, one sits on a mat and travels down a dizzying spiral slide.

**hemidemisemiquaver, n.**

**sixty-fourth note**

Musical term. See **Appendix II.F.**

**hemlock, n.**

*approx.* **poison**

A fatal potion made from a poisonous herb, *Conium maculatum* (*maculatum* means 'spotted' and the stems of the plant have spots). To a scholar it calls to mind Socrates, whom the Athenian court sentenced to die by drinking a cup of hemlock in 399 B.C.

**hempen fever**

SEE COMMENT

Death on the gallows, on a *hempen* rope.

**Her Majesty's**

**Stationery Office**

**Government Printing Office**

Often shortened to *HMSO*.

**hessian, n.**

**burlap**

**hi!, interj.**

*approx. Inf.* **hey! hello!**

*Inf.* Designed to call attention; often a remonstrance. Can be a greeting, as in America.

**hiccup, n.**

**hitch**

*Slang.* A snarl, any sudden obstruction that interferes with one's plans.

**hide, n.**

**hiding place**

Of a specialized type—for the observation of wild life. It is sometimes used also to mean 'hunting blind.'

**hidey-hole, n. Inf.**

**hideaway**

**hiding to nothing.** See **(be) on a hiding to nothing**

**highly-strung**

**high-strung**

See **Appendix I.A.3.**

**High Street**

The British commonly name the principal thoroughfare of their villages and towns *The High Street*, and in referring to it, they still retain the definite article (see **Appendix I.A.2**). British *High Streets* are about as common as American *Main Streets*.

**Main Street****high tea**

*High tea* includes something cooked: eggs or sausages or Welsh rarebit or any combination of these. It is the equivalent of a *light supper*.

**light supper**

**Hilary.** See under **term**.

**hip, n.**

*Inf.* Also used as a transitive verb meaning to 'give the blues' to someone, i.e., to 'depress' him. As a noun, it is sometimes spelled *hyp*, revealing its derivation (*hypochondria*). Now often called the *pip*. See also **(the) hump**.

*Inf.* **the blues**

**hire.** See under **engage**.

**hire-and-drive, n.****rent-a-car****hire-purchase, n.****installment plan**

Also known colloquially as the **never-never**, suggesting that the final payments are never made. Also, that which is repossessed is known as *hire-purchase snatch-back*.

**hit (someone) all over the shop, Inf.***Inf.* **run rings around (someone)**

**hit for six.** See under **six**.

**Hitler's War****World War II**

*Inf.* See also **Great War**.

**hit off, Inf.****mimic accurately****hive off****split off**

*Inf.* Used of a group that splits off from the main organization, like a swarm of bees deserting the hive or a group of employees leaving their jobs in a company to start their own company.

**HMSO.** See **Her Majesty's Stationery Office**.

**hoarding, n.****billboard**

The primary meaning of this word (apart from its use as present participle of *hoard*) is 'construction site fence,' the roughly built temporary type, on which people are fond of posting notices despite the customary advice to the contrary, and through the holes or chinks of which people are fond of peering. *No Hoarding* is not an injunction in times of shortages of commodities; it means *Post No Bills*, which sometimes appears as *Stick No Bills*.

**hockey, n.****field hockey**

To a Briton *hockey* means 'field hockey'; to an American, 'ice hockey.' If a Briton wants to talk about the type played on ice, he calls it *ice hockey*. If the American means the game played on the ground, he says *field hockey*.

**hogget, n.**

In certain British country dialects the name *hogget* is applied to a *young sheep* before the first shearing of its coat.

**yearling sheep****hoick, v.t.**

*Slang*. Particularly, to *raise* or *hoist* with a jerk. The noun *hoick* comes from rowing slang: a *jerk* at the end of a poorly executed stroke.

**jerk****hoist, n.**

See also **lift**; **elevator**.

**freight elevator****holdall, n.****carryall**

**hold a watching brief.** See under **watching brief**.

**hold on!**

In Britain, an interjection, without the sense of 'wait!' or 'be patient!' or 'hold your horses!', though it has these meanings as well.

**just a minute!****hold the baby**

*Slang*. Usually in the phrase *be left holding the baby*.

*Slang*. **hold the bag****hold the ring**

*Inf*. To *hold the ring*, or *keep the ring*, is to *stay out of a situation* or to *remain on the sideline*. The expression is also used in the context of keeping third parties from interfering in a fight. The ropes forming the prize ring in the old days were not attached to posts but were held by the spectators, thus forming the ring.

**stay out of it****hold-up, n.**

*Inf*. Any delay, whether as a result of heavy traffic, fog, road construction, etc.

**traffic jam; delay****hole-and-corner, adj.**

*Inf*. A *hole-and-corner man* is a *shady character* or *operator*, and *hole-and-corner work* is *shadiness* generally.

**underhand****hole-in-the-corner, adj., Inf.**

Imparting a slight connotation of shabbiness. *The wedding had a hole-in-the-corner air*.

**played down****holiday, n.**

An employee in Britain looks forward to his or her *holiday*, and while on vacation is a *holidaymaker*. But the university student in Britain speaks of *vacations*, and the summer recess is the *long vacation*, often shortened to *long vac* or simply *long*. See also **come down**.

**vacation****hols, n.pl.**

*Inf*. Short for *holidays*; mainly **public school** jargon.

**vacation time****home and dry**

*Inf*. Or *over the hump*, or *home free*, i.e., *doing all right*. Sometimes *home and dried*, and even extended occasionally to *home and dried on the pig's back*.

*Inf*. **having achieved one's goal**

**Home Counties**

SEE COMMENT

Counties nearest London, especially Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hertfordshire, and Sussex.

**home-farm, n.****residence farm**

The farm lived on by a farmer who works several farms that he rents.

**home from home****home away from home****homely, adj.***Inf.* **homey**

*Homely* is used in Britain to mean 'simple,' 'unpretentious,' 'nothing fancy.' A *homely* woman in Britain is a friendly, unassuming, domestic type. It is quite possible to be attractive and homely in Britain. *Homely*, in America, is uncomplimentary and means *not good looking* or even *ugly*.

**homeminder, n.****house-sitter**

Cf. **child-minder**.

**Home Office**

SEE COMMENT

Performs some of the functions of both the U.S. Department of the Interior and the State Department.

**Honourable, adj.**

SEE COMMENT

Usually abbreviated to *Hon.* For the use of this term in the system of British titles, see **Lord**.

**Honours.** See **Birthday Honours**.

**honours even***Slang.* **even Stephen**

*Inf.* Synonymous with **level pegging**.

**honours, four.** See **four honours**.

**hon. sec.**

SEE COMMENT

Abbreviation for *honorary secretary*, a noble term bestowed upon long-suffering, unpaid, general factotums of nonprofit organizations. There are *hon. treas.* as well, who handle the money.

**hood, n.****convertible top**

Automobile term. See also **Appendix II.E**.

**hoo-ha, n.****uproar; row**

*Inf.* Trouble, a *to-do*. See also: **shemozzle**; **scrum**; **dust-up**; **slang**; **Kilkenny cats**; **barney**.

**hook it***Slang.* **beat it**

*Slang.* The Americans *make off*, *take a powder*, *get out of town*, *take it on the lam*, and do lots of other picturesque things to get away from the police, their wives, and other troublesome people. Synonymous with **leg it**.

**hook off****uncouple**

Railroad term.

**hooligan, n.****hoodlum****hoop, n.****wicket**

In croquet. See **wicket** for British uses of that term, both literal and figurative.

**hooter, n.****1. Slang. schnozzle****2. automobile horn****3. factory whistle****hoover, n., v.t., v.i.****1. n., vacuum cleaner****2. v.t., v.i., vacuum (clean)**

Originally *Hoover* was a trademark, but the word has now become generic, like aspirin, thermos, etc. It is also used as a verb: one hurries home to *hoover* the carpet because guests are coming. The trademark was derived from the name of the pioneer in the field, William Henry Hoover (1849-1932). Mr. Hoover was an American—the first mayor of North Canton, Ohio.

**hop; hopper.** See under **oast**.**horses.** See **come to the horses**.**hospital job****made work**

*Inf.* The term *hospital job* has acquired a dishonorable connotation and now commonly signifies an unscrupulous worker's conversion of a straightforward assignment into a "career." He came to fix a shutter in May and is somehow still around in August.

**hospital nurse****registered nurse**

Still addressed and referred to in Britain as **sister**, whether or not the hospital or the nurse in question is connected with a religious order. The order of rank in Britain is *nurse, sister, matron*; and *sister* is applied properly only to a nurse of sister rank, but it is often loosely used to describe or address any nurse.

**hostelry, n.****inn**

The shorter form *hostel* in both countries indicates a specialized type of *inn* for young people or for others with special requirements.

**hotel page****bellhop**

Often shortened to *page*. An informal term is *buttons*.

**hot ice****dry ice**

*Dry ice* is the more usual term in Britain.

**hot on****1. *Inf.* tough on****2. good at**

**1. *Inf.*** Thus: *The boss was hot on latecomers.*

**2. *Inf.*** *He's hot on gardening, i.e., expert at it.* Synonymous with **dab**.

**house, n.****1. building****2. show**

**1.** As part of the title of an office building, with a capital *H*. For instance, the British speak of *Esso House*, the Americans of the *Empire State Building*.

2. If there are two shows a night, the British talk of going to the first *house* or the second *house*, whereas Americans go to see the first *show* or the last *show*. See also **House Full**.

### House Full

*approx.* **Sold Out**

Sign seen outside Covent Garden and certain theaters, imparting the intelligence that there isn't even any standing-room. The *Standing Room Only* sign goes up first, succeeded, when appropriate, by *House Full*. See **house**, 2.

**household troops**. See **Guards**.

### housemaid, *n.*

**chambermaid**

A **chambermaid** in Britain is a *hotel maid*.

### houseman, *n.*

**intern**

A hospital term.

### housewife, *n.*

**sewing gear kit**

Pronounced HUZZIF in this meaning.

### housing estate

**residential development**

### howler, *n., Inf.*

*Inf.* **boner**

### How's that? *interj.*

SEE COMMENT

The cry, called an *appeal*, to the umpire in a cricket game by one or more of the team (**side**) in the field demanding a ruling that the batter (**batsman**) is out on one technicality or another.

### hoy, *Interj.*

**drive**

*Hoy!* is used in herding or driving cattle. To *hoy* a herd is to *drive* it by gestures and shouts of *hoy!* or whatever else comes to mind.

### huggery, *n.*

**drumming up trade**

*Inf.* Activities of **barristers** wooing **solicitors**. Rhymes with SKULDUGGERY.

### hullo! *Interj.*

**hey! (what's going on?)**

(Accent on the first syllable.) It is not only a simple greeting; it can also be an expression of surprise—*what's happening here?*

### hum and ha, *Inf.*

*Inf.* **hem and haw**

Sound of hesitation.

### humane society

**lifesaving service**

A *humane society* man would be called a *lifeguard* in America. A *humane society* in America is a benevolent organization for the care and shelter of pet animals.

### humble pie

**crow**

People eat *crow* in America, and, rarely, *humble pie*; in Britain it is never *crow*, always *humble pie*. Both terms signify *humiliation*, especially that of *eating one's words*, i.e., having to retract a previous categorical assertion. The *humble* in *humble pie* is corruption of *umbles*, a word now obsolete in both countries, and a variant of *numbles*, an archaic English word for the entrails of a deer. *Umble pie*, long ago,

was a pie of the inferior parts of a deer served to huntsmen and other servants. The inferior parts included the heart, the liver, and the lights. *Lights* is a plural noun meaning the *lungs* of animals, now usually used as food for domestic pets.

**humbug**, *n.*

**mint candy**

Hard, with white and brown stripes, and very tasty.

**(the) hump**, *n.*

*Slang.* **(the) dumps**

*Slang.* You can wake up with *the hump*, or get it or have it. People and things that give you *the hump* would be said to *get you down*. *The hump* would seem to imply a certain amount of irritation combined with depression, like *the sulks*. *I've got the hump* means 'I'm fed up.' If you're *humpy*, you're *down in the mouth*, *in the dumps*. See also **hip**.

**hump**, *v.t*

*Inf. lug; schlepp*

*Inf.* The image is that of one wearily carrying a heavy burden. *Schlepp* is heard increasingly in Britain.

**hundred**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

Subdivision of a county in the old days. See **Chiltern Hundreds**.

**hundreds and thousands**

*approx.* **multicolored sprinkles**

Tiny candies spread on top of cookies, cakes, or ice cream. See also **chocolate vermicelli**.

**hundredweight**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

112 pounds in Britain; 100 pounds in America.

**hunt**, *v.i.*

**skip; miss**

*Inf.* If your motor is *hunting* in Britain, it is alternately racing and stalling.

**hunt, in the.** See **in the hunt**.

**hunt, out of the.** See **in the hunt**.

**hunter**, *n.*

**watch with hinged covers**

If it has hinged covers front and back, it is a *hunter*; if only a front cover, a *half hunter*. These names derive from the function of the cover(s): to protect the watch on the hunting field.

**huss**.

SEE COMMENT

A kind of fish. See also **Appendix II.H**.

**hyp.** See **hip**.

**hyper-market**, *n.*

**giant supermarket**



**ice, n.**

In most British restaurants, *ices* means *ice cream*, and *ices*, *various* is the name for *assorted flavors* thereof. The British use *sorbet* for *sherbet*, but *sherbet* in Britain means 'powdered candy,' a sweet sugar-like substance that children suck up through licorice sticks. *Water ice*, meaning 'sherbet' in the American sense, is sometimes seen on British menus instead of *sorbet*.

**ice cream**

**icing sugar**

See also **castor sugar**.

**powdered sugar**

**identification parade**

**police lineup**

**identity disc**

The Americans prefer the slang expression, for which there is no British slang equivalent.

*Slang.* **dog tag**

**I have to say that . . .**

*Have* here does not express necessity, any more than the *am* in *I am to say*, in officialese, expresses futurity, or the *beg* in the corresponding American phrase implies a request for permission. The entire phrase, in each country, should be omitted.

**I beg to say that . . .**

**ilk. See of that ilk.**

**ill, adj.**

SEE COMMENT

The British use *ill* in the usual American senses, but also in ways in which it would not appear in America. Thus, one often hears a television announcer describe the victim of an accident or a shooting as 'seriously ill,' where an American would have been likely to use a phrase like 'in critical condition.' Note that **sick** is generally not used as a synonym for *ill*, but much more narrowly, to mean *nauseous*, and to *be sick* is to *throw up*.

**I'll be bound**

*Inf.* This expression comes only at the end of a sentence so that it never takes a dependent clause.

*Inf.* **I bet**

**I'm easy (about it)**

*Inf.* *I'm easy (about it)*, in answer to a question posing a dilemma or an alternative, e.g., *Would you rather I came at 10:00 or 11:00?* means *I don't care*, or *It's all the same to me*. *I'm easy about it* has a British equivalent in *I don't mind*. Usually shortened to *I'm easy*. See also **mind, 2**.

**It's all the same to me**

**immersion heater**

An *immersion heater* heats water for the whole house, as opposed to a **geyser**, which provides a supply of hot water in a particular room, usually the kitchen. Often referred to as the *immersion*.

**hot water heater**

**immigrant, n.****non-white**

*Inf.* Used by some as a pejorative synonym for **coloured**, which in Britain includes Asians and persons of mixed ancestry as well as of African descent. Properly speaking, in either country, any person entering another country to settle there permanently is an immigrant.

**imperial, adj.***Inf.* **unsurpassable**

*Inf.* As in, an *imperial balls-up* (see **balls**) which is *one lousy mess*.

**importune, v.t.****solicit**

In America, *importune*, in addition to its primary meaning of 'beset, ply, dun,' can mean 'to make improper advances toward' someone. In England, *importune* is used in the special sense of 'solicit for immoral purposes,' and is commonly used to describe the activities of active prostitutes.

**impost, n.****punishment task**

*Schoolboy slang.* An informal shortening of *imposition*, sometimes written *impo*, referring to an unpleasant task assigned as a punishment at school, like having to write, *I shall not pass notes during Scripture 500 times*.

**impression, n.****printing**

Thus: First published January 1968

Second *impression* February 1968 . . .

In a book printed in America the *second impression* would be called the *second printing*.

**imprest, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Funds advanced to a government employee for use in official business. Formerly, it meant an advance payment to a soldier or sailor on enlistment.

**in a cleft stick***Slang.* **in a pickle**

*Inf.* The two branches of a *cleft stick* are like the *horns of a dilemma*.

**in a flap, Inf.***Inf.* **het up****in a flat spin***Slang.* **rattled**

*Slang.* Usually in the expression *going into a flat spin*, meaning agitated or panic-stricken.

**in a fuzz, Slang.***Slang.* **in a tizzy****in aid of****for (used for)**

*What's that in aid of?* 'What's that for?'—asked by someone pointing to an object whose function is unclear. Can also be asked about intangibles like a shout or a trip.

**in a way; in a great way. See way.****in (someone's) bad books***Inf.* **in dutch with (someone)**

*Inf.* Variant: *in (someone's) black books*. Synonymous with **in the cart**.

**in baulk, balk***Inf.* **in a spot**

*Inf.* Meaning 'in difficulties.'

**in care**

Said of children, and applies equally to an orphanage.

**in a foster home****incident room**

A term beloved of English detective story writers; temporary headquarters set up during the investigation of the crime; a control room where the hero-detective and staff meet and discuss things.

**(approx.) situation room****indent, *n., v.t.*****requisition****indexed. See index-linked.****index-linked, *adj.***

Describes savings programs, investments, etc. where the income and/or capital are geared to the British cost-of-living index (the *UK General Index of Retail Prices*—RPI for short). *Index-linked* is sometimes shortened to *indexed*, and the process has been dubbed *indexation*, which can be applied to wages and salaries as well.

**adjusted for inflation****Indian. See red Indian.****Indian meal**

*Corn* in the American sense is usually called *maize* in Britain at the agricultural or trade level (see **corn**), but another British name for it, at the gardener's or householder's level, is *Indian corn* (sometimes *corn on the cob*). Hence *Indian meal* for *cornmeal*.

**corn meal****industrial action**

Anything from a slow down to a full-fledged strike.

**union protest activity****industrial estate. See under estate.****ingle-nook, *n.***

A word that summons up an irresistibly cozy, even stirring, image of the quintessential Briton by his hearth. Rooms in old houses sometimes have fireplaces as much as eight or ten feet wide, with a grate or stove in the center from which the smoke runs into a narrow flue. Comfortable chairs can be placed on either side, within the fireplace.

**chimney corner****ingrowing, *adj.***

Referring to toenails. The Americans seem resigned to a *fait accompli*.

**ingrown****in hand****1. at one's disposal****2. under control**

1. As in, *Aberdeen still has two games in hand*, and though trailing at the moment, might yet win the Scottish first division **football** (soccer) championship. In this sense, *in hand* would be *to go in America*: ... *two games to go*.

2. *Being attended to: Not to worry; the matter is in hand.*

**inland, *adj.***

The British speak of *inland* postage rates and *inland* revenue. The opposite number of an American *internal revenue agent* is the British *inland revenue inspector*. But see **internal**.

**domestic; internal**

**in low water**

1. *Inf.* **hard up**
2. *Slang.* **in hot water**

1. *Inf.* Financial stress is the usual connotation.  
 2. *Inf.* *Difficult straits* or a *depressed state* generally (e.g., the weak position of a political party out of favor) is the broader implication, and in this sense its American equivalent would be *in hot water*. *Low in the water* is a variant, meaning 'up against it.'

**innings, n. sing.****inning**

Note the -s, which does not make *innings* plural. An American *inning* is a British *innings*. The standard British plural is the same as the singular; informally, it is *inningses*.

**Inns of Court**

SEE COMMENT

These are the four legal societies which alone may admit persons to the bar in the sense of allowing them to practice as **barristers** as distinguished from **solicitors**. These societies are the Inner Temple, Middle Temple, Lincoln's Inn, and Gray's Inn. The term *Inns of Court* denotes not only those societies but also their buildings in London.

**in one's gift****at one's disposal**

With particular reference to a **living**.

**in pod***Slang.* **knocked up**

*Slang.* Both countries use inelegant terms for "pregnant." See also **preggers** and **pudding club**. See **knock up** for its various British meanings.

**inquiry.** See **enquiry.****insect, n.****bug**

Americans use *insect* and *bug* more or less interchangeably. In Britain *bug* means 'bedbug.' *Bug* has slang meanings in both countries. In British slang a *big bug* is what Americans call a *big gun*, a *VIP*.

**inside (of a bus)****bottom**

And the *outside* of a bus is its *top*. These terms refer to double-deckers and are reminiscent of the days when the top was uncovered, and therefore the *outside*. Nowadays it's all inside, literally speaking, but *outside* is still often heard from conductors.

**inspectorate, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Governmental body for inspection of schools and education generally. Performs some of the functions of a Board of Education.

**in store.** See under **store.****instruct, v.t****retain**

Term used in the legal profession. In Britain a client instructs a **solicitor**, that is, **engages** him. In America a client *retains*, engages, or hires a lawyer.

**intake, n.****entrants**

*Inf.* Those recently *taken in*. Covers entrants into a university, the ministry, the armed forces, etc. The slang American equivalent in military and sports usage would be *rookies*.

**interfere with**

To *rape* or *sodomize* (e.g., a child). The British circumlocution is even more euphemistic than the American.

**molest****interior-sprung, *adj.***

Type of mattress.

**inner-spring****internal, *adj.***

Term applied to air travel. But see **inland**.

**domestic****international, *n.***

SEE COMMENT

Also *internationalist*. An athlete who has represented his or her country abroad, especially at soccer, rugby, or cricket, although for cricket the proper term is *test player* (see **Test Match**).

**interval, *n.*****intermission**

The short period of time between acts at the theater or between the halves of a concert. *Tea in the interval?* (at the matinee) or *Coffee in the interval?* (at an evening performance) used to be the courteous and comforting question addressed to members of the audience by British ushers in most theaters, and if the question was answered in the affirmative, you were served at your seat. Stronger beverages may be procured at the bar in every British theater.

**in the basket*****Slang.* no soap; no dice**

*Slang.* When a proposed project is *in the basket*, it's *no soap* (*rejected, discarded, nothing doing*).

**in the cart, *Slang.******Slang.* in the soup**

**in the club.** See **pudding club**.

**in the dock.** See **dock, 2**.

**in the driving seat, *Inf.******Inf.* in the driver's seat****in the event****as it turned out**

Thus: *In the event, the vote was much closer than expected*. The phrase does not connote futurity, as does an expression like *In the event of rain . . .*, but refers to something that actually came to pass despite predictions or expectations to the contrary.

**in the hunt*****Inf.* in the running**

*Inf.* And out of the hunt is not in the running.

**in the picture****fully informed****in the same case****in the same situation**

Used when comparing one person's situation with another's.

**in trade.** See **trade**.

**in train****coming along**

Sometimes *on train*. These expressions are not often heard in America. In Britain the phrases are heard quite frequently, as the normal response of merchants or

contractors to whom one is complaining about delay: *It is in train*, meaning he has done all he can, and you must be patient.

**in tray, n.**

**in box**

Both receptacles provide efficient means for letting papers pile up on one's desk and serve as visible reminders of our dilatory natures. The British by now surely have filled their *in trays* to overflowing and we also hear them saying they have *in boxes* that need attention.

**in two shakes of a duck's tail, Inf.**

**Inf. in two shakes of a lamb's tail**

*Inf. Lamb's tail*, as well, in Britain. *Shake*, by itself, can mean 'moment' in either country, of a *duck's* or *lamb's tail* being understood. In a *brace of shakes* is synonymous in Britain with *in two shakes of a lamb's* or *duck's tail*.

**inty, n.**

**(school) recess**

*Schoolboy slang*. The *interval* of freedom.

**invalid carriage**

**electric tricycle**

They are issued by the Ministry of Health, in some cases to working people who could not otherwise get around.

**invalid's chair**

**wheelchair**

Also called **bath chair** and **wheeled chair**.

**inverted commas**

**quotation marks**

**invigilator n.**

**proctor at school examinations**

To *invigilate* is to *keep vigil*, i.e., watch over students during examinations.

**ironmonger n.**

**hardware dealer**

**-ish, adv.**

**somewhat; sort of; rather; about**

*Inf.* Tacked on to an adjective or adverb, this suffix adds an attenuating nuance, with the same force as placing *somewhat*, *fairly*, or *sort of* before the word, or *about* or *around* in expressions of quantity or time. Americans are familiar with *-ish* after adjectives of color: *reddish*, *greenish*, or of general age: *youngish*, *oldish*. But the British are prone to add *-ish* to almost anything: *tallish*, *fattish*, *poorish*; to numerals in expressions of quantity: *How many people were at the party? Oh, fiftyish*; in general or specific expressions of time: *earlyish*, *latish*; *I'll get there elevenish* ('around eleven o'clock'); and with adverbs: *The play began slowish* ('got off to a rather slow start'), but **smartish** is used instead of *quickish*. There are British uses that do not occur in American speech: After a name, meaning *characteristic of*, as in *That's a Maryish gesture* ('one characteristic or reminiscent of Mary'); *That's a Teddyish reaction* ('the way Teddy would react'). By itself, as an answer or reaction, meaning 'well, sort of,' or 'if you say so,' or 'somewhat,' to someone else's statement or question: *She's pretty. Well, -ish. I found the food in that restaurant quite good. How about you? -Ish, or, Only -ish.*

**I shall be glad if you will . . .**

**Please . . .**

Officialese, properly objected to.

**issue, v.t**

Used as follows: *There is no charge for issuing you with our credit card.* The British might also have said: . . . *for issuing our credit card to you.* The Americans might say *furnishing you with* or *supplying you with* but would not use *issue* in the British construction.

**furnish**

**it.** See **martini.**

**item, n.**

An *item* in a political *program* in Britain is what Americans would call a *plank* in a political *platform*.

**plank**

**It isn't true!**

**That's (or It's) incredible!**

**izzard, n.**

Archaic.

**(letter) z**



**jack, n.**

*Inf.* Not much used, the word, that is.

*Inf.* **handyman**

**jacket potato, *Inf.***

**baked potato**

**jakes, n.**

*Slang.* Archaic word for outhouse, toilet.

*Slang.* **can (privy)**

**jam, n.**

*Slang.* A real jam is British slang for a real treat. A jam sandwich in Britain can mean what it does in America, but it is also a term used to mean the kind of layer cake that has preserves between the layers. See also **jam sandwich**.

**treat**

**jam, money for.** See **money for jam**.

**jam on it.** See **have jam on it**.

**jam sandwich**

*Slang.* So named because the vehicles have been white with a red stripe along the middle, suggesting jam between two slices of white bread. Cf. **panda car**; **Z-car**.

**police car**

**jam tomorrow, *Inf.***

Easy enough to promise jam, harder to provide it.

*Inf.* **pie in the sky**

**Janeite, n.**

Sometimes spelled *Janite*. Not an American word, since Jane Austen is not a national craze.

**Jane Austen fan**

**jankers, n., pl.**

*Slang.* In the special sense of *military jail*. *Jankers* has other meanings in military slang: 'defaulters'; their 'penalty' or 'punishment'; the 'cells' themselves. To get ten days' *jankers* is to be confined to the *stockade* for that period.

*Slang.* **jug**

**jaunty, n.**

*Naut. Slang.* Head policeman on a naval vessel. The official title in both the Royal Navy and the United States Navy is *master-at-arms*, often abbreviated to *M.A.A.*

**master-at-arms**

**jaw, n.**

*Slang.* A contemptuous term. A *pi-jaw* (*pi-* is short for *pious*) is one of those lectures or sermons delivered by a schoolteacher or a scout leader on a man-to-man basis to prepare the nervous youngster for life's pitfalls.

**talking to**

**jaw-bacon.** See **chaw-bacon.**

**jaw-jaw, n., v.i.**

1. endless discussion

2. drone on and on

*Slang.* See also **jaw.**

**jelly, n.**

**gelatin-type dessert**

*Jelly* is used in Britain as in America, but in a British restaurant if you wanted Jell-O or its equivalent for dessert, you would ask for *jelly*.

**jelly-bag cap**

**stocking cap**

*Inf. Jelly-bags* are used for straining jelly and are made of the kind of stretchable material associated with what Americans call *stocking caps*.

**jemmy, n.**

**jimmy**

British burglars use *jemmies*; their American colleagues use *jimmies*. *Jemmy* is also used as the British name for a dish made from sheep's head.

**Jeremiah, n.**

*Inf. gloomy Gus*

*Inf.* Everybody knows (or should know) that Jeremiah was a doleful prophet.

**jerry, n.**

*Inf. potty*

*Slang.* Also called *jerrycan* or *jerrican*, a 5-gallon chamber pot. With a capital J it is British slang for a *German*, or *Germans* collectively.

**jersey, n.**

**pullover; sweater**

See also **jumper; woolly.**

**jib, v.i.**

**buck**

*Inf.* Normally applied to balking horses and in Britain, informally, to cars as well or even to stubborn persons.

**jiggered, adj.**

1. *Slang.* **pooped**

2. *Slang.* **up the creek**

3. *Slang.* **damned!**

1. *Slang.* After a long day's work, you're *jiggered*.

2. *Slang.* In a tough situation, like running out of gas in the middle of the night, you'd feel *jiggered*.

3. *Slang.* The exclamation *I'm jiggered* means 'I'll be damned' as in *Well, I'm jiggered—fancy meeting you here!*

**jiggery-pokery, n., Inf.**

*Inf.* **hanky-panky**

**jim-jams, n. pl. Slang.**

*Slang.* **willies**

A fit of nervousness or depression.

**Jimmy, dismal.** See **dismal Jimmy.**

**jink, v.t., v.i.**

**dodge**

To *dodge about* jerkily, to avoid being hit. Said of game birds and extended to war-planes.

**job**, *v.t.***1. rent (horse and carriage)****2. prod**

1. The British used to *job* horses and carriages in the old days, the verb being applied to both supplier and user (the way Americans use *rent*). *Jobbing*, in this sense, described an arrangement for a specified period of time, and the supplier was called a *jobmaster*.

2. Standard British English for *stab*.

**jobber**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

On the London Stock Exchange, there are a dozen firms that act as wholesalers and are analogous to oddlot firms on the New York Stock Exchange, in that they are principals, acting for their own account, rather than brokers acting only as agents for buyer or seller.

**jobbernowl**, *n.*, *Inf.**Slang. dope; jerk***job of work****job***Inf.* In the sense of *work to be done*.**Joe Bloggs****Joe Doakes**

Mr. What's-his-name; anybody who isn't anybody; Tom, Dick, or Harry.

**John Dorey**See **Appendix II.H.****johnny**, *n.**Inf. guy*

*Slang.* Usually pejorative. For the British meaning of *guy*, see **guy**.

**join**, *v.t.***board**

To *join* a train, ship, plane, etc. is to *board* it.

**joiner**, *n.***carpenter**

Technically speaking, *joiners* in both countries, as distinct from *carpenters*, engage especially in interior light carpentry (doors, shelves, etc.) and cabinet making. The British appear often to use the terms interchangeably, but *joiner* is rarely heard in ordinary American speech.

**joint**, *n.***roast**

In Britain that tasty leg of lamb or roast of beef or loin of pork is known as a *joint*. Popular for Sunday lunch, hence the *Sunday joint*.

**jollop**, *n.**Inf. guck*

*Slang.* Any witches' brew you take for whatever ails you, like patent medicines and home remedies.

**jolly**, *n.**Slang. leatherneck*

*Slang.* A *Royal Marine*. Synonymous with *guffy* and *bullock*.

**jolly**, *adv.*, *Inf.**approx. mighty (very)***joskin**, *n.***bumpkin**

*Slang.* Sailors use this term to describe any lubberly hand. The exact meaning of *joskin* is a man from the Norfolk area who works as a farmhand during the sum-

mer and on trawlers in wintertime, and is therefore, presumably, a green hand on board.

**josses**, *n.*, *Slang*.

*Slang*. **geezer**

**jotter**, *n.*, *Inf*.

1. **steno pad**  
2. **notebook**

2. Also **exercise book**.

**judder**, *v.i.*

**shake**

Violently and noisily. A bit of onomatopoeia, also influenced by *shudder*. It can apply to anything from a jalopy to an opera singer, and is also used as a noun to denote the phenomenon.

**Judy**, *n.*

*Slang*. **broad**

*Slang*. An uncomplimentary word for *woman*, suggesting that she's no beauty.

**jug**, *n.*

**pitcher**

In Britain it is the milk *jug* or water *jug* which is placed on the table. *Jug* is also a slang word for 'poison' in both countries.

**juggernaut**, *n.*

**large truck**

*Inf*. Very large; short for *juggernaut lorry*. (See **lorry**.) Usually refers to an enormous trailer truck (see **articulated lorry**). The word is related to *Jagannath*, an idol of the Hindu god Krishna that was drawn in processions on vast carts and under whose wheels fanatics threw themselves in their ecstasy, to be crushed to death.

**juggins**, *n.*

*Slang*. **dope; fool**

*Slang*. Synonymous with **muggins**. See also **git**.

**jumble**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

Goods sold at a *jumble sale* or unwanted things in the house allocated to the local *jumble sale*. Can also be used loosely to mean 'junk.'

**jumble sale**, *n.*

**rummage sale**

**juniper**, *n.*

**pullover**

This term is used to describe a woman's *pullover sweater*. See also **jersey; woolly**.

**jump jockey**, *Inf*.

**steeplechase rider**

**jump to it**, *Inf*.

*Inf*. **hop to it**

**junction box**. See **box**.

**junk**

**worn-out rope**

Old, worthless stuff, rubbish, which is called *junk* in America, is generally referred to as *rubbish* or **lumber** in Britain, where *junk*, though now extended to mean 'rubbish' generally, is still more especially a nautical term meaning 'worn-out hawsers' or 'cables' which are either discarded or picked apart for use as caulking material or in making swabs.

**just**, *adv.*

Where an American would say, "I can't find it now, but it was *right* over there," i.e., no farther than that, a Briton would say " . . . *just* over there." Were the Briton to say, " . . . *right* over there," he would mean ' . . . way over there,' i.e., no nearer than that. If he said, "Drink it *right* up," he would mean 'drink it all,' whereas an American would mean "drink it at once, *right* now."

*adv.* **right****just a tick!***Inf.* **right with you!***Inf.* See also **hold on!****just going****just about**

Used in expressions of time of day: *it's just going twelve* means *it's just about twelve*, or, *practically twelve*. The expressions *just on* and *going on for* are used by the British in the same way: *it's just on nine o'clock*, or *it's going on for nine*, i.e., *it's not quite* or *it's just about nine*. See also **gone**.

**just here****right here****just on.** See **just going**.

# K

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**K., n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* To get one's K. is to be knighted (see **Birthday Honours**).

**K.C.** See under **take silk**.

**kedgeriee, n.**

SEE COMMENT

(Accent on the first or third syllable.) Composed of fish, usually smoked haddock, cooked with rice and eggs, and other variable ingredients. The word is derived from the Hindi word *khichri*. It is normally a breakfast dish, and not very common.

**keel, n.**

1. barge

2. 21 tons 4 cwt.

1. Type of boat used, usually to carry coal, on the Rivers Tyne, Humber, etc. Still seen, but going out of use.

2. Weight of coal that can be carried on a *keel*, and still used as a wholesale coal measure. Since a British *ton* is 2240 lbs. and a British cwt. (**hundredweight**) is 112 lbs., a *keel* is, in American terms, 47,488 lbs., or a sliver under  $23\frac{3}{4}$  tons. See also **Appendix II.C.1**.

**keelie, n.**

*Inf.* tough

*Slang.* A Scottish term, derived from the Keelie Gang, a band of hoodlums that terrorized the streets of Edinburgh in the early 19th century. It is applied particularly to street ruffians from Glasgow and environs.

**keenest prices**

**biggest bargains**

*Inf.* Often seen in advertisements: *For keenest prices shop at So-and-So's*.

**keen on**

**much attracted**

*Inf.* *Dead keen on* and *mad keen on* indicate mounting degrees of enthusiasm.

**keep, v.t.**

**raise**

A Briton who *keeps* pigs is not simply having them as pets; he is in business and in America would be said to be *raising* them.

**keep a straight bat**

*Inf.* **play fair**

*Inf.* One of many expressions borrowed from **cricket**, which is itself synonymous with *fair play* in the mind and idiom of a Briton.

**keep cave.** See **cave**.

**keeper, n.**

**custodian; guard**

When Americans use the word *keeper* they think in terms of a prison, an insane asylum, or a zoo. *Keeper* is the usual British term for a *museum guard* or *zoo*

*employee.* To a Briton, **guard** would normally invoke the image of a railroad conductor or a sentry.

**keep obbo on**

*Inf.* **keep an eye on**  
*Slang.* An *obbo* was an observation balloon in World War I. *Keeping obbo* is policemen's slang for *surveillance*.

**keep one's terms.** See *eat one's terms*; *Inns of Court*.

**keep the ring.** See *hold the ring*.

**keep your eyes skinned.** *Inf.*

*Inf.* **keep your eyes peeled**

**Keep your pecker up!**

*Inf.* **Chin up!**

*Inf.* In this expression, *pecker* means 'spirits' or 'courage.' This connotation of *pecker* is probably derived from its original meaning of a 'bird that pecks' (cf. *woodpecker*), and by extension that with which it pecks, i.e., its beak, which became slang for 'nose.'

**Kendal green**

**green woolen cloth**

Coarse in texture. Takes its name from Kendal, a town in England where the cloth was originally made.

**Kentish-fire, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Prolonged rhythmic applause to express disapproval. The expression is attributed to anti-Catholic demonstrations in Kent in the early 1800s.

**Kentish man**

SEE COMMENT

Native of the County of Kent, England, born west of the River Medway. If born east of it, he is a *man of Kent*.

**kerbside-crawl.** See *gutter-crawl*.

**kerfuffle, n.**

**fuss; commotion; dither**

*Slang.* Found also in the spellings *cufuffle* and *gefuffle*, and probably in others as well. It is sometimes used as synonymous with **shemozzle**.

**kettle-boy, n.**

**tea maker**

Formerly, boy employed on a construction site to keep the tea kettle going all day long.

**kettle-holder, n.**

**pot-holder**

**keyless watch**

**stem-winder**

**kibble, n., v.t.**

**1. n., mine bucket**

**2. v.t., grind**

*Kibbled wheat* is *cracked wheat*.

**kick the beam**

**lose out**

**kick-up.** See **dust-up.**

### **Kilkenny cats**

*Inf.* Based on an old Irish legend about two cats who fought each other so long and so murderously that finally there was nothing left but their tails. The figurative meaning of the phrase retains reference to the audible squabbling of the cats, rather than to their gruesome end.

### **squabblers**

### **King's (Queen's) evidence**

In Britain, the accused cooperates with the prosecution by *turning King's* or *Queen's evidence*, the phrase being determined by the sex of the sovereign at the time. In America, the phrase is *state's evidence*.

### **state's evidence**

**kinky, adj.**

**1. sexually unconventional**

**2. twisted; odd**

**3. sophisticatedly off-beat**

**4. *Inf.* cool**

**1. *Slang.* Or appealing to such tastes.**

**2. *Slang.* Peculiar; kooky.**

**3. *Slang.* As of clothes, for instance.**

**4. *Teenage slang.* Synonymous with **gear** and **fab**.**

**kiosk, n.**

**1. newsstand**

**2. telephone booth**

**kip, n., v.i.**

**1. rooming-house**

**2. room in a rooming-house**

**3. bed**

**4. sleep**

*Slang.* The *house*, the *room* in the house, the *bed* in the room, the *sleep* in the bed; sometimes seen in the expressions *go to kip*, *have a kip*, *take a kip*, or *kip down*, meaning to 'turn in.'

**kipper, n.**

*Inf.* **kid; tot**

*Slang.* Synonymous with a like-sounding British slang word—**nipper**.

**kirby grip n.**

**bobby pin**

Also known in Britain as *hair-slide* and *hair grip*.

### **kissing gate**

*Approx.* **cattle gate**

*Kissing gates* found in rural Britain are gates hung with the side away from the hinge swinging within a V-shaped or U-shaped enclosure in such a way that people can get through but cattle can't. You push the gate away from the nearside of the V or U, step into the latter, slide over to the other side, and push the gate back. This quaint device may have acquired its romantic name because it was the place where a swain said goodnight to his lady love, and a certain amount of lingering was in order.

### **kiss of life**

**1. mouth-to-mouth resuscitation**

**2. boost**

**1. The life-saving procedure.**

**2. *Inf.* Probably modeled on the phrase *kiss of death*, it has acquired the meaning of something that revitalizes or provides new hope for an ailing project, situation, etc.**

**kiss your hand.** See **as easy as kiss your hand.**

**kit, n., v.t.**

**outfit**

As a noun, *outfit* in the sense of special dress, like *skiing kit*, *camping kit*, etc. As a verb, *outfit* in the sense of *equip*. Sometimes lengthened to *kit up*.

**kitchen garden**

**family fruit and vegetable garden**

**kith and kin**

**friends and relations**

One's own people.

**knacker, n.**

SEE COMMENT

One who purchases animal carcasses and slaughters superannuated livestock for rendering into various products. The plant in which this is done is called a *knackery* or *knacker's yard*.

**knackered, adj.**

*Slang.* **tuckered out**

*Slang* A grim image, derived from the previous entry.

**knave, n.**

**jack**

In playing cards. *Jack* is another name for this card in Britain.

**knickers, n. pl.**

*Inf.* **panties**

*Inf.* In America *knickers* would be understood as short for *knickerbockers*, which is the British term for *plus fours*, an article of wearing apparel still seen there. See also **camiknickers**. To *get your knickers in a twist* is to *get all het up* about something or to *make a muddle* of things.

**knife-and-fork tea**

*Approx.* **light supper**

*Inf.* A **high tea** at which meat or fish is served and a knife is required. See also **high tea**; **cream tea**.

**Knight.** See **K**.

**knob, n., Slang.**

*Slang.* **scab (strikebreaker)**

**knob, n.**

**lump**

Of butter, sugar, etc.

**knobble.** See **nobble**.

**knobs.** See **with knobs on!**

**knock, n.**

*Slang.* **hit (success)**

*Slang.* Synonymous with the British sense of **bomb**. But see **bit of a knock**.

**knock, v.i.**

*Slang.* **wow (impress)**

*Slang.* To *knock* someone in American slang is to *disparage* him, but in British slang it means to *impress* him greatly, i.e., to *knock him dead*, and is probably short for *knock for six* (see **six**).

**knock acock**

*Inf.* **bowl over**

*Inf.* To *astonish*, to present with the unexpected.

**knocker.** See **up to the knocker.**

**knocker, n.**

**door to door salesman**

*Slang.* To *work on the knocker* is to *work from door to door*. Synonymous with **doorstep salesman**.

**knocker-up, n.**

**1. arouser**

**2. SEE COMMENT**

1. *Inf.* A person whose job is to summon sleeping railroad workers or miners to their jobs.

2. *Inf.* The term is used also in political circles, to describe a party worker charged with the function of getting out the vote.

**knock for six.** See **six.**

**knocking-house, n., Slang.**

**whorehouse**

**knock on**

*Inf.* **turn up**

*Inf.* To *knock on* for work is to *turn up for work*; generally applied to **casual labourers**; an echo of the more common *knock off* (work), used in both countries.

**knock-on effect**

**side effect**

The concomitant result, incidental consequence.

**knock oneself up**

**knock oneself out**

To *overdo it*.

**knock-out, n.**

**1. volleying**

**2. elimination contest**

1. A tennis term, synonymous with **knock-up**.

2. A competition involving the elimination of losers, on the way to the finals.

**knock up**

**1. wake up by knocking**

**2. exhaust; wear out**

**3. Inf. throw together**

**4. earn**

1. *Inf.* A respectable American will go to great pains to avoid *knocking up* a lady friend, as he understands the term, because in his country it is an indelicate expression for getting a lady into a delicate condition. In Britain, *knocking* people *up* means waking people up by knocking on their door.

2. *Inf.* Another common British usage to be avoided in America: *I'm quite knocked up*, or *He does knock me up*. This refers merely to exhaustion, physical or emotional.

3. *Inf.* An unrelated British meaning is 'throw together,' as in, *Don't stand on ceremony, come along, we can always knock something up*, referring to the preparation of an impromptu meal. This usage was originally American, but is now exclusively British.

4. *Inf.* As in, *He knocks up twenty thousand quid a year, I'll be bound*.

**knock-up, n.**

**volleying**

Tennis term, synonymous with **knock-out, 1.**

**know the form, *Inf.***

*Inf.* **have the inside dope**

**K.O.**

**kickoff**

*Inf.* A British football abbreviation. Thus, on a poster advertising a football game, "K.O. 3:00 P.M." It also means 'knockout,' a boxing term, as in America.



**label**, *n.*

**sticker; tag**

**labourer.** See **agricultural labourer; casual labourer.**

**labour exchange**

*approx.* **state employment office**

In this meaning, the words are often capitalized: *Labour Exchange*. In lower case, the term can denote any union building which houses its headquarters, meeting rooms, etc.

**lacquer**, *n.*

**hair spray**

**lad**

SEE COMMENT

Americans are familiar with this word in the sense of 'boy' or 'youth,' but do not use it commonly as the British do. Examples: 'He's a good lad' (about a dependable, or a generous, or an honest *man*). 'Good lad!' (said to a mature man who has come through with a good deed or a nice gesture). 'Get your lads out' (spoken in a TV drama by a police captain to a subordinate as instructions to get his men out on the street to hunt for the villain). Americans might use *boy* in some of these cases. *The lads* is the almost universal term in which British labor leaders refer to their members, rather than 'the men' or 'the members.' Used that way, the term suggests loyalty, solidarity, and affection.

**ladder**, *n.*

**run**

This term applies to ladies' stockings and pantyhose (**tights**). *Ladder-proof* hose, etc., are advertised in Britain just as *run-proof* articles are advertised in America, but the ladies remain skeptical on both sides of the Atlantic.

**Lady**, *n.* (in titles)

SEE COMMENT

The daughter of a duke, marquess or earl (in which case *Lady* is used with the forename, e.g., *Lady Jane Smith*); or the wife of a *peer* (except a duke), a *baronet* or *knight* (in which case *Lady*, without the forename, is followed by the name of the peerage or surname as the case may be, e.g., *Lady Bloomsbury*, *Lady Smith*). (Coincidentally, *Lady Bloomsbury* may also be a peeress in her own right.) If *Lady Jane Smith* marries Mr. Bloggs, she becomes *Lady Jane Bloggs*. See also **Lord; Dame; K.; baronet; peer.**

**ladybird**, *n.*

Also called a *golden-knop*.

**ladybug**

**Lady Day**

SEE COMMENT

March 25, so called because that is the day of the Feast of the Annunciation. See **quarter-day.**

**ladyfy (ladify), v.t.**

SEE COMMENT

To *ladyfy* or *ladify* a woman is to make a lady of her, though it can mean merely to lend dignity to a woman by calling her a lady. *Ladified* describes a woman exhibiting the airs of a refined lady.

**Lady of Threadneedle Street.** See **Old Lady of Threadneedle Street.**

**lag, n., v.t.**1. *Slang.* jailbird2. *Slang.* send up; pinch

*Slang.* A *lag* is a *jailbird* and the word is usually found in the expression *old lag*. To be *lagged* is to be *sent up*, although *lagged* sometimes means merely 'pinched,' 'arrested,' whether or not the unfortunate is eventually *sent up*. A *lagging* is a *stretch*. There exists an organization called the *Old Lags Brigade*, which consists of hardened criminals placed on last-chance probation before they are imprisoned.

**laid on.** See **lay on.**

**lambs' tails**

catkins

*Inf.* *Lambs' tails* in Britain, in addition to making good soup, also refer to *catkins* hanging from certain trees such as the hazel and willow, and *catkins* in both countries are *downy flowerings* or *inflorescences*. The word *catkin* is a rather cloying diminutive of *cat* (formed like *manikin*, *pannikin*, etc.) and was invented because of the resemblance of those inflorescences to cats' tails.

**lame duck**1. *Slang.* hard-luck guy

2. stock exchange defaulter

1. *Slang.* A *person in difficulties, unable to cope*. The narrow American usage, describing an incumbent political official or body still in office after losing an election but only because the winner has not yet been seated, is a highly restricted application of this British meaning. This narrow American usage, however, appears to have been adopted by some British political pundits. The term can also be applied to a firm in financial difficulties, or a troubled industry.

2. *Slang.* This term also describes a person unable to meet his obligations on the London Stock Exchange. Also a *lossmaking company*.

**land agent**

real estate broker

Synonymous with **estate agent**.

**landed, adj.**1. *Inf.* O.K.; in good shape2. *Inf.* out of luck; lost

3. SEE COMMENT

Depending on the context, this participial adjective can have two exactly opposite meanings, even if used in identical sentences.

1. *Inf.* If one were waiting for the last available table in a restaurant which was being held until 8 o'clock for someone else, one could say, *If he doesn't show up by eight, we're landed*, meaning *we're okay*.

2. *Inf.* If one's friend who had the tickets to a show or match were alarmingly late, the same sentence could be expressed, and . . . *we're landed* would mean 'we're out of luck'; 'we've had it.'

3. *Landed gentry* describes those of the **gentry** who own land.

**landlord, n.**

innkeeper; pub keeper

In addition to its wider general meaning in both countries, *landlord* has the special British meaning and flavor of 'inn-keeper.' Many **pubs** were once real *inns* and a few still have rooms for rent, but some that no longer let rooms still have

names that include the word *hotel*. The keeper of such a pub is still called *landlord* and is so summoned and addressed by clients not familiars of the establishment who don't feel privileged to address him by name. **Publican** is synonymous with *landlord* in this sense and comes from *public house*, a term still in use but far less common than *pub*. See **free house** for a discussion of the landlord's business arrangements. See also **pub**; **during hours**.

**Land of the Leal**

*Leal* is a Scots form of *loyal*.

**heaven****landslip, n.****landslide****land (someone) with****saddle (someone) with**

Often used in the passive form, *landed with*. Synonymous with **lumbered with**, though the latter invokes an added dimension of inconvenience.

**larder, n.****pantry****large, adj.****double**

As used in ordering a drink at the pub or restaurant. A *large* whiskey (*whisky* in Britain for Scotch; Irish *whiskey* has the *e*), gin, vodka, etc. is a *double* portion. See under **double**, 3.

**lark, n.****job; type of activity**

*Inf.* "It's too hot for this *lark*," says a sweating laborer doffing his jacket, using *lark*, specifically a *sport*, as a sardonic synonym for *job* or *task*—the same type of British humor as found in "Are you happy in your work?" addressed to one who is palpably miserable as he plugs away at an unwanted task.

**lasher, n.****pool**

Particularly, one formed by water spilling over a *weir*.

**lashings, n. pl., Slang.***Slang.* **scads****lash out, v.i.***Inf.* **throw money around**

*Slang.* To *lash out* on something is to spend money on it recklessly and without stint.

**lash-up, n. Slang.****1. fiasco****2. improvisation****last post****taps**

Virtually the same as *taps*—not the tune, but the function. There are two British *posts*, called *first post* and *last post*. The first one comes about ten minutes before the other, as a sort of ready signal.

**laugh like a drain, Slang.***Slang.* **horselaugh****lavatory paper****toilet paper**

Delicacy, like the American use of *tissue*.

**lawk(s)!***Inf.* **lordy!**

*Vulgar.* Used jocularly by the upper classes. *Lawks-a-mussy* is the fuller expression.

**Law Society***approx.* **Bar Association**

There is a national *Law Society* and there are also many local ones in Britain just as there are a nationwide *Bar Association* and many local ones in America. In certain matters such as the setting of ethical standards of conduct, the furtherance of legal education, and so on, the functions of the British and American bodies coincide. Membership in *law societies* is confined to **solicitors** only. **Barristers** have their own group, which is known as the General Council of the Bar.

**lay, v.t.**

1. set
2. impose

1. The table.

2. A tax, as in a tax laid on wealth by certain governments.

**layabout, n.****loafer; hobo****lay-by, n.****driver's rest area**

*Roadside parking space.* When you see a road sign reading LAY-BY as you drive along in Britain, you know that up ahead on your left, there will be a turn-out which broadens into a parking area. People use it for short-term parking, e.g., to take a nap, to look at the view, or as a picnic area.

**lay (someone) by the heels****track (someone) down****lay on****provide; arrange for**

Very commonly seen in the participial form *laid on* meaning 'provided for in advance.' Thus, office quarters can be rented in Britain with or without a secretary *laid on*.

**lay on the table.** See **table.****lay (oneself) out to****put (oneself) out to****laystall, n.****rubbish heap****lea.** See **ley.****leader, n.****1. newspaper editorial****2. chief counsel****3. concert master**

This word has three distinct British meanings that are not found in America:

1. It means 'newspaper editorial,' especially the principal one. There is a related (and rather unattractive) word *leaderette*, which has nothing to do with female leaders but means a 'short editorial paragraph' following the main one. The expression *fourth leader* is a British inside joke, originated by *The Times* (London). It denotes a humorous discursive essay.

2. Another meaning is 'leading counsel' on a team of lawyers trying a case.

3. Finally, it means the 'concert master' of an orchestra, i.e., the first violinist who sits to the conductor's left and is his right-hand man, acting as his liaison with the rest of the players.

**lead for the Crown****act as chief prosecuting attorney**See also **leader, 2.**

**league table****teams' performance records**

Originally applied to tables ranking the records of teams or clubs constituting an athletic league, it has been extended to refer to tabulated comparisons of performances in any field of endeavor.

**leasehold.** See **freehold.**

**leat, n.****open watercourse**

Enabling mill etc. to operate.

**leather, n.****chamois**

For wiping or polishing automobiles etc.

**leave, v.t.****graduate from**

In the expression *leave school*, which in America connotes dropping out, but in Britain means simply that the student is graduating. See also **leaver**; **school-leaver**.

**leave alone****not deal with**

In the sense of 'leave undisturbed.' *Leave me alone!* for *Let me alone!* formerly was nonstandard in America; not so in Britain.

**leaver, n.****Inf. short-timer**

In America, such a person is known as a graduating senior. One about to complete the curriculum at a **prep school** or **public school** at the end of that term is known as a *leaver*. On the completion of the term the *leaver* becomes an **old boy** or **old girl**. See **school-leaver**; **leave**.

**leave in the lurch****abandon, desert**

*Inf.* As in *He went off to America, leaving his family in the lurch*. See **shoot the moon**.

**leave well alone****leave well enough alone****leaving gift****retirement present****lecturer, n.****instructor**

In a British university. See also **reader**.

**left-arm, adj.****left-handed**

To describe a left-handed **bowler** (*approx.* cricket counterpart of a pitcher); but a left-handed **batsman** (*batter*) is called *left-hand*.

**left luggage office****checkroom****lefty, n.****Slang. leftist**

*Inf.* The American usage meaning 'left-handed person' is often heard in Britain.

**legal aid****SEE COMMENT**

In Britain, *legal aid* is supplied from Government funds made available to litigants who otherwise could not afford to pay for legal services. In America, there are Legal Aid Societies supported by private contributions.

**legal figment**

A proposition accepted as fact for the sake of argument or convenience, though without foundation in fact. *Legal fiction* is used in Britain also.

**legal fiction****leg it**

Walk hard, run hard.

*Slang.* **beat it**

**legitimate drama**

This phrase means very different things in the two countries. In Britain it refers to dramatic works of established merit as opposed to melodrama or farce, no matter how well known, e.g., *Hamlet* vs. *East Lynne*, or *The Rivals* vs. *Charley's Aunt*. In America the *legitimate theater* means the 'stage' as opposed to any other form of dramatic representation, and *legitimate drama* includes any play produced on the stage.

**stage plays****leg-pull, n.**

*Inf.* Joking attempt to deceive someone.

**hoax****lengthman, lengthsman, n.**

A *lengthman* is a laborer charged with the duty of keeping a certain *length* of road in good condition. The word developed in the old days before the creation of a countrywide system of hard-surfaced roads requiring the services of teams of road workers equipped with all kinds of heavy machinery. It evokes the image of the solitary worker equipped with only a spade, a high degree of independence, and a noble sense of responsibility.

**road maintenance man**

**let.** See **engage.**

**let alone**

She does not have a time of her own, *let alone* an independent income.

**not to mention****let-out, n.**

*Inf.* Often used attributively, as in the phrase *let-out clause* meaning 'escape clause.'

***Inf.* loophole****letter-box**

See also **pillar-box**; **post-box**.

**mailbox****letter post**

The terms *first-class mail* and *second-class mail* are now current in Britain to indicate priorities for delivery.

**first-class mail**

**let the shooting.** See under **shoot**.

**let the side down.** See under, *v.t.* **side**.

**levant, v.i.**

*Slang.* Commonly after welshing, or welching, on a gambling loss.

**skip town****level, adj.****1. even****2. close**

1. When players are *level* in a game, it means that they are *even* in winnings.
2. However, a *level* race is not a *tie* but only a *close* race.

**level crossing**

Of a railway and road.

**grade crossing****level par**

Golf term used by sports announcers to mean 'par,' in describing the performances of tournament contestants.

**par****level pegging**

A term borrowed from cribbage, in which the score is kept by advancing *pegs* along a series of holes in a board. It applies to equal scores in games or mutual obligations between friends or businessmen which wash each other out.

**even Stephen**

**levels (A-levels; O-levels).** See **A-levels**.

**ley, n.**

(Pronounced LAY.) *Ley-farming* is the system of putting a given area into grazing pasture for a few years, then *catching the fertility*, as they say, and using that area for a particular crop. A *ley* is a *rotating pasture*; variant of *lea*.

**temporary pasture****Liberal Jew**

In America, the three branches of Judaism are Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform; in Britain, Orthodox, Reform and Liberal.

**Reform Jew****Lib-Lab, adj.**

*Inf.* Anything involving both Liberal and Labour party supporters. Originally it applied to members of the Liberal party in the beginning of the century who supported the new Labour party. *Lib-Labbery* was coined to describe an alliance between the two parties and is now usually used to denote shady political dealings.

SEE COMMENT

**licenced, adj.**

Seen on most British hotels and restaurants. See also **off licence**.

**having a liquor license****lich- (lych-) gate, n.**

A roofed churchyard gate, under which the coffin is placed while awaiting the arrival of the officiating minister. Also called *resurrection gate*. *Lich* is an obsolete English word for 'body.'

SEE COMMENT

**lick and a promise**

*Inf.* Term meaning a *light wash*, useful in describing a boy's morning wash.

***Inf.* quick job****lido, n.**

The *Lido* is Venice's famous bathing resort. A *lido*, in Britain, is a public swimming pool. One sees the term **corporation swimming-bath**, meaning 'public swimming-bath.' *Corporation* in that phrase is the equivalent of the American term *municipal*.

**public open-air swimming pool****lie doggo**

*Slang.* Literally, to *lie doggo* is to *lie motionless*, the way a dog does; to *play dead*. Figuratively it means to 'bide one's time.'

***Inf.* lie low****lie down under**

*Inf.* To *give way* to the other party, to accept without protest.

***Inf.* buckle under**

**lie in****sleep late**

*Inf.* In the morning. One can *lie-in* or *have a lie-in*. Synonymous with **sleep in**.

**lie up***Inf.* **take to one's bed**

*Inf.* With the connotation of not feeling well.

**life-belt, n.****life preserver****Life Guard**

SEE COMMENT

Member of the senior of the two regiments of Household Troops—all six feet tall or more. (The other regiment is called the *Blues and Royals*.) The household involved is the royal household. Properly speaking, a member of this elite cavalry regiment is called a *Life Guardsman*. *Lifeguards* in the American sense of people who save other people from drowning are still sometimes called **humane society men**, but the American term is becoming common in Britain.

**life vest****life jacket**

The British say *jacket*, too, but British Airways' pamphlets and signs remind passengers that there is a *life vest* under each seat.

**lift, n.****elevator**

To go higher in a building without walking, the British use *lifts*, the Americans *elevators*. To stand up higher, the British put **elevators** into their shoes, the Americans *lifts*.

**lighting-up time**

SEE COMMENT

Time of day when lights must be lit by vehicles on the road.

**like a dog's dinner***Inf.* **all dolled up**

*Inf.* To be *got up like a dog's dinner* is to be *dressed to kill*. Somewhat pejorative; not quite synonymous with **dressed to the nines**. See also **dog's breakfast**.

**like old boots, Inf.***Inf.* **like a house afire****like one o'clock****1. promptly; quick and lively****2. Inf. to a T**

(Main stress on *one*.)

1. *Inf.* Sometimes it has the sense of 'vigorously.'

2. *Inf.* *Does that suit you, sir? Like one o'clock!*

**limb, n.***Inf.* **little devil**

*Inf.* *Limb* is a shortening of the phrase *limb of the devil* or *limb of Satan* and is used to mean 'mischief-making youngster,' the way *little devil* is used in America. See also **kipper; basket**.

**limb of the law****arm of the law**

Referring to lawyers, policemen, and the like.

**limited company****corporation**

Also called *limited liability company*, more usually just *company*. See **company; corporation**.

**line, n.****track**

In Britain it is the railway *line* one mustn't cross, according to the signs, whereas Americans use the word *line* to mean a whole railroad company, rather than the track itself. Passengers in America are warned not to cross the *track*.

**line of country****one's business or occupation**

*Inf.* Very often in the negative, to indicate that something is beyond one's capabilities: *I'm afraid that's not my line of country.* Alternatively, *That's not up my street.* An American equivalent would be *not in my line.* Used in the affirmative, in a sentence like, *I'd take it to Jones; that's just his line of country,* the American version would be *That's just up his alley.*

**liners, n.****underpants**

*Inf.* Worn under **knickers**.

**lining, n.****striping**

Term used in painting, e.g., the painting of automobiles.

**link, v.t.****link arms with**

To hook one's arm through another's.

**linked signals****staggered lights**

Traffic lights graduated so that you always have a green light if you drive within the proper speed limit.

**linkman****1. anchorman; moderator****2. go-between**

1. In radio and television.

2. Originally described a position in soccer (**football**); now extended to mean any go-between.

**lino, n.****linoleum**

*Inf.* (Pronounced LIE'-NO.) The British almost always use the informal shortening. *Linoed* means 'covered with linoleum.' A *linoed* floor is a *linoleum* floor.

**lint, n.****surgical dressing**

For the British equivalent of American *lint* see **fleck**.

**lip salve****lip balm**

Also means "flattery."

**listening room****control room**

Where the engineer of a television or radio station sits.

**literal error****misprint**

Typographical error, usually called *typo*.

**litter bin****trash basket**

**little basket.** See under **basket**.

**little-go, n.****SEE COMMENT**

*Inf.* Former term for the first examination for the B.A. degree at Cambridge or Oxford; now archaic.

**little Mary, *Inf.***

A colloquial euphemism for the stomach.

**stomach****live in cotton wool***Inf.* **Cotton wool** is *absorbent cotton*, used here as a metaphor for careful packing to provide insulation from the traumata of life in this harsh world. See also **wrap in cotton wool**.**live a sheltered life****live like a fighting cock***Inf.* To insist on the best of fare; a *fighting cock* always gets the best.**eat high off the hog****liverish, *adj.*****glum, bad tempered****Liverpudlian, *n., adj.***

SEE COMMENT

Native or inhabitant of Liverpool, England. Of Liverpool. Their dialect is called **Scouse**.**liver sausage****liverwurst****livery, *n.****Livery* is used generically in Britain and America to describe certain types of uniform, such as those worn by chauffeurs. In Britain it is now also applied to characteristic *color schemes* like those of the various divisions of the British railway system.**costume****living, *n.***

Ecclesiastical term for the position of rector, vicar, etc. with income and property.

**benefice****loaf, *n.****Slang.* Short for *loaf of bread*, cockney rhyming slang for 'head' but now adopted as general slang as in such expressions as *Use your loaf!* See **Appendix II.G.3**.*Slang.* **bean (head)****loan share; loan stock****bond****lobbyist, *n.***One frequenting the hall of the House of Commons to pick up political news. Sometimes called *lobby correspondent*. By now the term has acquired the common American meaning as well, though perhaps with less suggestion of impropriety.**political journalist****local, *n.*****1. neighborhood bar****2. native****1. *Inf.*** Britons often talk of nipping down to the *local* (*local pub*).**2. *Inf.*** Usually heard in the plural, the *locals* is an affectionate term meaning the *natives*, the people in a particular community who look as though they haven't just moved out from the city, have been around a while, really belong there, and are going to be around for some time to come. Compare **tripper**.**loch; lough, *n.*****1. lake****2. sea inlet****1.** In Scotland. Americans usually pronounce it **LOK**. The Scots pronounce *loch* like the Germans. *Lough* is the Irish form of *loch*, pronounced the Scottish way.

2. *Loch* can also mean 'narrow inlet,' known then correctly as *sea loch*. See also **lough**.

**locum, n.** **doctor covering for another**  
*Inf.* The term is also applied to a clergyman's temporary replacement. *Locum* is an informal shortening of *locum tenens*. A literal translation of *locum tenens* would be 'one holding a place,' and by inference, a 'person taking somebody else's place,' i.e., a 'replacement.'

**lodger.** See under **boarder**.

**loft, n.** **attic**

**lofty catch** **approx. pop fly**  
 A cricket term.

**loiter with intent** SEE COMMENT  
 Short for *loiter with intent to commit a crime*; more specific than *vagrancy*.

**lollipop man (woman; lady)** **approx. children's traffic guide**  
*Inf.* Employed to assist children across the street. The *lollipop* label is derived from the form of the stick carried, which is surmounted by a disk reading: STOP. CHILDREN CROSSING.

**lolly, n.** **dough (money)**  
*A piece of the lolly*, the lollipop, has its American slang equivalent in *some of the gravy*. See also **brass; dibs**. A *lolly* in Britain (reminiscent of *lollipop*) is also ice cream or water ice on a stick.

**Lombard Street** **approx. Wall Street; money market**  
*Inf.* London's money market, named after its function as principal street for banking and finance; analogous to *Wall Street* when used that way. But *the City* is the more usual expression for the financial community generally. *It's all Lombard Street to a China orange* means *the odds are a hundred to one (or a thousand to one)*. Variations are: *all Lombard Street to a Brummagem sixpence* (see **Brum**): . . . *to ninepence*, . . . *to an egg-shell*.

**long chalk.** See **not by a long chalk**.

**long firm, Inf.** **Inf. set of deadbeats**

**long-head, n.** **Slang. shrewd cookie**  
*Inf.* The adjective is *long-headed*.

**long odds on** **heavy favorite**  
 This is a sports term, used as a phrasal noun.

**long pull** **extra measure**  
*Inf.* In a **pub**, the *long pull* is a measure of beer or other liquid refreshment over and above the quantity asked for; in other words, a drink with a built-in dividend. Sometimes the *long* is omitted, so that a *pull* means the same thing as a *long pull*.

**long sea outfall**

This awkward phrase describes a sewage pipe that sticks way out into the ocean in order to dispose of the effluent of a seaside town without polluting the beaches.

**remote sewage disposal pipe****long-sighted, adj.**

In Britain *far-sighted* is hardly ever used literally to describe corporeal optical capacity. It is almost always used in the figurative sense of *looking ahead*, a figurative use shared with America. The British term for *nearsighted* is *short-sighted*, which is always used figuratively in America to describe a person who doesn't plan ahead, and this figurative use, too, is shared with Britain. In other words, the British use *long-sighted* and *short-sighted* literally where the Americans would say *farsighted* and *nearsighted*. The British use *far-sighted* figuratively, as the Americans do; and the Americans use *shortsighted* figuratively, as the British do.

**farsighted****long-stay, adj.**

Applied, e.g., to hospital patients.

**long term****long stop****1. SEE COMMENT****2. backstop; reinforcement**

1. In **cricket**, the fielder back of the wicket-keeper, who is there to stop the balls that get away from the wicket-keeper.

2. *Inf.* Extended to describe any person or thing that serves to prevent or check an undesirable result in case the person primarily in charge is wanting.

**long vac.** See under **come down; holiday**.

**loo, n, Inf.**

*Inf. john*  
Bathroom, lavatory, washroom, rest room, convenience, boys' room, little boys' room, girls' room; little girls' room, gents', gents' room, ladies', ladies' room, privy, water-closet, W.C., powder-room—the euphemisms have proliferated like mushrooms after a shower. The word *toilet* is often avoided as too euphemistic, while to most Americans it seems indelicate. In public notices in Britain, *toilet* is the usual term, perhaps because *toilet* or a recognizably similar term (*toilette*, *toiletta*, *toiletten*) is thus used in many foreign countries whose nationals often come to Britain. In Britain the educated and literary say *lavatory* or *W.C.*; almost everyone else says *loo*; the lower middle class and the genteel say *toilet*. The common American euphemism is *bathroom*.

**looby, n. Slang.**

Also a lazy person.

**simpleton****look like . . .**

*Look like*, plus a gerund, is used as the equivalent of *look as if* followed by a subject and a subjunctive: *Next week looks like being crucial for the Labour Party (looks as if it were going to be)*. This practice seems nonstandard to Americans, but is acceptable in British informal speech.

**look as if . . .****look out****1. pack****2. select**

*Look out* has a good many British uses shared with America, but there are two not so shared:

1. While watching you pack for a trip, your British friend might say, “Look out your **woollies**; it’s cold where you’re going”. *Look out*, in that sense means ‘pack,’ and your friend is advising you to *take along* a few sweaters. Better follow the advice.

2. One can also *look out* facts in reference works while engaged in a research project. Here, *looking out* means ‘looking up,’ and then ‘selecting’ the data you find for use as authority to prove whatever it is you’re trying to prove.

### look-out, *n.*

*Inf. Prospect*, as in stock market forecasting: *The look-out for that group of companies is bleak*. It also has the connotation of *lot* or *fate* when it refers to something then future, now past: *To die at 18—that had been a poor look-out*, i.e., *a sad fate*. *Look-out* has the ordinary American informal meaning as well (‘responsibility,’ ‘concern’), as in: *Keeping petrol in the car is your look-out*. Conversely, the standard American meaning of *lookout* (no hyphen), a *point* from which one gets a wide view of the landscape, is often **viewpoint** in Britain, which of course may refer to things abstract rather than concrete in America.

### outlook

### look-out window

### picture window

### look round

### look

As a noun phrase: a *good look*, an *inspection*. See also **recce**; **shifty**.

### look sloppy! *Slang.*

### be quick

### look smart! *Slang.*

### get a move on

### loopy, *adj.*, *Slang.*

### *Slang.* loony

### loose-box, *n.*

### horse stall

### loose chippings

### loose gravel

### loose covers

### slipcovers

### loose waterproof

### slicker

### Lord, *n.* (in titles)

SEE COMMENT

A marquess, earl, viscount, or baron (i.e., any peer except a duke) is referred to socially not by these full titles but as *Lord So-and-so* (without forename); his wife is *Lady So-and-so* (see **Lady**). The eldest son of a duke, marquess, or earl takes a spare title of his father’s (known as a *courtesy title*) and is therefore *Lord Somebody-or-other*. Other sons of dukes and marquesses have names of the form *Lord John Smith*, and their sisters are *Lady Jane Smith* and so on. The other children of earls, and all the children of viscounts and barons, are merely *Honourable*, which means that in conversation they are plain *Mr* or *Miss*; but in addressing an envelope to them one should write “The Hon. John Smith,” and “The Hon. Mrs John Smith” to their wives. In addition to members of the peerage, the title *Lord* also belongs to certain dignitaries such as the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice, etc., and judges in court are addressed as *My Lord*, pronounced M’LUD or M’LORD. A Lord’s signature consists of his title without a forename, e.g., Lord Smith will sign simply “Smith.” Bishops are *Lords Spiritual*. For their signatures see **Cantuarian**.

A **commoner** raised to the peerage may take a title different from his surname. Thus Benjamin Disraeli became the Earl of Beaconsfield (Lord Beaconsfield). Nowadays, however, it is increasingly the practice to keep the surname (to avoid the risk of one's identity being eclipsed). Thus Mr or Sir R. Grey may become Lord Grey. The Labour statesman Mr George Brown elected to become Lord George-Brown, and the ex-diplomat Sir Gladwyn Jebb became Lord Gladwyn (thus, intentionally or not, putting back to square one anybody who was in the habit of addressing him by his first name). See under **Commons** for information about the House of Lords.

### Lord Chamberlain

SEE COMMENT

Head of management of the Royal Household; formerly the authority who granted play licenses, a censorship office now happily abolished.

### Lord Chancellor

approx. Chief Justice

Also called *Lord High Chancellor*. He presides in the House of Lords when it is acting as Britain's Supreme Court. Not to be confused with the Lord Chief Justice of England, who presides over the Queen's Bench Division of the High Court, from which appeals are taken to the Court of Appeal, and from there to the House of Lords. Although America (apart from Louisiana, whose law descends from the Napoleonic Code) inherited its common law (general body of basic law) from the mother country, their court systems developed differently; and short of a long historical treatise on the subject, not of general interest, one will have to be content with approximations. In rough terms, the American Chief Justice and the British Lord Chancellor are each other's opposite numbers, in that they are the top judicial officers of their respective countries, and both take office by appointment, the American for life, the British for a term dependent on the vicissitudes of politics.

### lords and ladies

jack-in-the-pulpit

The name of a wild plant, also called *cuckoo pint*.

### lorry, n.

truck.

To *lorry-hop* or *lorry-jump* is to *hitchhike*. An **articulated lorry** is a *trailer truck*. See also **bender**; **juggernaut**.

### lost property office

lost and found

Also, **baggage service**.

### lot, n.

1. Slang. the works

2. group

3. Slang. bunch

1. *Inf.* The *lot* means 'the whole lot,' 'the whole kit and caboodle,' 'the works.' Thus, *They gave me a beautiful room, marvellous food, wonderful service . . . the lot!* The gift was all wrapped up in fancy paper, gold string, the lot. The lot also means 'all' of something. At a sale, there are three dresses hard to choose from. You ponder and ponder and finally say (recklessly), "I'll take *the lot*," i.e., 'all' of them.

2. *Inf.* It also has the meaning of 'group.' In an American Chinese restaurant, they are fond of arranging dishes into Group A, Group B, etc. They do it in Britain too, and there you would say, "We'll have two from the first *lot*, three from the second *lot*," etc. From directions written by a friend: "At the first traffic lights you turn right, at the second *lot*, left."

3. *Inf.* *Lot* means 'group' in another sense, too, the sense in which Americans use the slang term *bunch*. Thus, if a Briton saw a group of unsavory-looking characters on a street corner, he might think, *I don't like the looks of that lot*, where an American would refer to them as *that bunch*. *You lot* means 'the lot of you,' i.e., 'all of you,' in addressing a group of people, and might come out in America as *Hey, you guys*.

(a) lot on one's plate. See **have enough on one's plate**.

**loud hailer**

**bullhorn**

**lough, n.**

**tidal stream**

Particularly in the **Fens**.

**lounge, n.**

**living room**

Also meaning 'waiting-room.'

**lounge bar**

SEE COMMENT

Synonymous with *saloon bar*. *Lounge bar* is sometimes used instead of *saloon bar* to indicate the fancier and more exclusive part of a **pub**. But, like so many other things in Britain, it isn't quite that simple, because some bars boast *saloon bars* as well as *lounge bars*, and even *saloon lounges*.

**lounge suit**

**business suit**

**love, n.**

*approx.* **honey**

*Inf.* Often spelled *luv* in allusion to its Northern (North of England) origin and pronounced LOOV (-OO- as in LOOK) for the same reason. Widely used as a very informal term of address in the North of England: by men only to women, but by women without distinction as to sex, a primarily lower-class vocative (when applied to strangers). The nearest American equivalent would be *honey*, which used to have a particularly Southern flavor, but by now has spread all over the country.

**lovely!, interj.**

**great! fine!**

*Lovely!* is heard all the time in Britain and is by no means the exclusive property of the cultured. *Lovely!* covers a multitude of expletives: *fine! great! wonderful! marvelous! terrific! that's it!* and even *wow!* It can also be used in place of *thanks*.

**low in the water.** See **in low water**.

**(Her Majesty's) Loyal Opposition**

**party not in power**

*Loyal* to the monarch; *opposed* to the party in power.

**(the) Loyal Toast**

SEE COMMENT

As the coffee is served at a meal which is part of the proceedings at a regular meeting of an organization like a guild, Rotary Club, and that sort of thing, the chairman stands up and announces, in stentorian tones: "*The Loyal Toast!*" Thereupon all stand, raise their glasses, and say in unison: "*The Queen!*" They take a swallow and sit down, and thereafter—and only then—is smoking permitted.

**L plate**

A large red L (standing for *learner*) on a square white plate attached to the rear of an automobile gives fair warning to all. An *L-driver* is one who has not yet passed his driving test, and is allowed to drive only with another person in the car and with the L plate as a warning.

*approx.* **Student Driver**

**£ s.d.**

(Pronounced ELL-ESS-DEE.) Spelled *£ s.d.* (or *L.S.D.*) it means 'pounds, shillings, pence.' These three letters are the initials of the Latin ancestors of those three words: *librae*, *solidi*, and *denarii*. The Roman occupation of Britain, of course, occurred a good many years ago, but the symbols remained until February 15, 1971, when Britain put its money on the decimal system (see **Appendix II.A**), shillings were abolished, and the abbreviation of *pence* changed from *d* to *p*.

**dough (money)**

**lucerne (lucern), n.**

**alfalfa**

**lucky-dip, n., Inf.**

*Inf.* **grab bag**

**lud, n.**

**Lord**

Old-fashioned pronunciation of *Lord* in addressing a judge; see **Lord**.

**Luddites**

Workers who grouped together in the 18th century to destroy machinery that caused loss of jobs.

**luge, n.**

**toboggan**

**luggage, n.**

**baggage**

Britons *register luggage*, Americans *check baggage*. On a British train, bags go into the *luggage van*; on an American train, into the *baggage car*.

**Luke's Little Summer**

*Inf.* **Indian summer**

*Inf.* Other British names: *St. Luke's Summer*; *St. Martin's Summer*.

**lumber, n., v.t.**

**1. junk**

**2. clutter**

*Lumber* is old furniture, stuff, doodads, and general junk around the house not good enough to use or be seen by your guests, not bad enough to throw away; you never really want to see it again but you can't bear to part with it. So you put it into your **lumber-room** or **box-room**, the way Americans stuff their attics, and wish with all your heart that you had never been *lumbered* with it. The British use *lumber*, especially *lumber up*, also as a verb. To *lumber up* a room is to *clutter it up*.

**lumbered with**

*Inf.* **saddled with**

*Slang.* See **landed with**.

**lumber-room, n.**

**storage room**

See also **box-room**.

**lumme! interj.**

*Slang.* **whew!**

*Slang.* Corruption of *love me!*

**(the) lump, n.**

*approx.* **independent contracting**

*Slang.* Originally, laborers and artisans who were willing to work by the day. Now the practice of workers in various phases of the construction business who decline to be hired as employees on a wage basis and instead, subcontract on their own as independent contractors, paid by the main contractor without deduction for income tax, health insurance, or anything else. The name of this practice derives from the giving of a *lump* sum to the group, regardless of the time involved or any other factor. The **lumper** is the middleman who handles the arrangements.

**lumper, n.**

**contractor**

*Slang.* See under **lump**.

**luncheon voucher**

**lunch coupon**

A fringe benefit granted employees by some employers. Vouchers are redeemable at certain restaurants up to a certain value. Often abbreviated to *L.V.* on the signs appearing in the windows of the establishments that honor them.

**L.V.** See **luncheon voucher**.

**ma'am, n.**

SEE COMMENT

This highly specialized form of contraction of *madam* is used as the proper form of addressing the Queen, and when it is so used it is pronounced M'M by servants and MAM by all others. Also used in addressing other ladies in the royal family, and as the equivalent of *sir* in the women's military services.

**mac, n.****raincoat**

*Slang.* Short for *mackintosh* (sometimes *macintosh*), a waterproof material patented in the early 19th century by Charles Macintosh, an amateur chemist. Macintosh was awarded the patent for waterproofing cloth by cementing two pieces together with rubber dissolved in a chemical solvent, thus making it suitable for a number of uses, including raincoats.

**macadam, n.****blacktop**

After J.C. McAdam, who late in the 18th century invented the building of roads with layers of crushed stone. **Tarmac**, short for *tar macadam*, added tar to the crushed stone layers. But since tar is almost universally added to the crushed stones these days, *macadam road* is used in Britain the way Americans use *blacktop road*. See also **metalled road**.

**machinist, n.****machine operator**

This term, used by itself in Britain, can mean any kind of machine operator, especially a sewing machine operator. The British also use the term *machine-minder* where Americans would say *machine operator*.

**mad on***Inf.* **crazy about**

*Inf.* Americans also say *mad about* and the British also say *crazy about*, but only the British say *mad on* to mean infatuated. When a Briton wants to be emphatic, he says *mad keen on*, or sometimes *dead keen on*, or even **struck on**.

**maffick, v.i.****exult riotously**

Mafeking is a small town in Cape Province, South Africa. During the Boer War it was besieged from October 13, 1899, to May 17, 1900, when the siege was raised. The relief of Mafeking was cause for great rejoicing and the populace of London and elsewhere celebrated the happy event with extravagance and exultation. The *-ing* ending was mistakenly believed by the general public to indicate a gerund, and *maffick* came to mean, to the many who had never heard of the place, 'celebrate hilariously' usually with the assistance of alcoholic stimulants.

**magistrate, n.***approx.* **justice of the peace****maiden over**

SEE COMMENT

In cricket there are two **bowlers**. Each bowler bowls to the opposing **batsman** six times. This constitutes an *over*. If the batsman fails to make a single run during the *over*, the result is called a *maiden over*, and the bowler is said to have *bowled a*

*maiden over*. Metaphorically *maiden over* can be used as an elegant and dramatic way of describing any achievement of consistent skill, one in which the protagonist triumphs over the assaults of his opponent.

## maid of honour

1. lady in waiting
2. cheesecake

1. An unmarried woman who attends a queen or princess.
2. The edible variety; a small round one.

## mains, *n. pl.*

## electric power source

The outside (light and power company) source. Thus, directions on an electric appliance: *Disconnect mains before adjusting controls*.

## maisonette, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

This term is sometimes applied to any small house or apartment, but generally refers to a part of a house (usually on more than one floor) rented separately from the rest of the dwelling. It is gaining some currency in the United States to describe a luxury duplex with a separate entrance on the ground floor, embedded in a highrise apartment building.

## maize, *n.*

## corn

See discussion under **corn**.

## major, *adj.*

## (the) elder

Used after a surname. In a British **public school** the eldest or most senior of three or more students then attending who have the same surname has *maximus* (the superlative form of the Latin adjective *magnus*, meaning 'large' or 'great') placed after his name; thus Smith *maximus*, i.e., Smith *the eldest*, to distinguish him from the other Smiths then at the school. The youngest would be Smith *minimus* (*minimus* being the superlative form of *parvus*, Latin for 'small'). The corresponding Latin comparatives, *major* and *minor*, are used when there are only two with the same surname. At some public schools, *major* has been used to mean 'first to enter,' even if an older Smith enters the school later, while the first Smith is still attending; and at other schools *maximus* and *minimus* have been used to refer not to age but to academic standing.

## majority, *n.*

## plurality

A voting term. When the British use the term *majority* in discussing an election they mean what the Americans call a *plurality*. If they want to indicate an arithmetical majority (i.e., more than 50 percent), they use the term *clear majority*.

**major road**. See **arterial road**.

## make, *v.t.*

## bring

*Bring a price* in an auction sale. *Fetch* is used in the same way.

## make a balls of

*Inf.* mess up

*Vulgar Slang*. See also **balls**, 2.

## make a dead set at, *Inf.*

*Inf.* make a play for

## make a (the) four up

make a fourth

For instance, at bridge or tennis doubles.

**make all the running***Slang. go the limit*

*Slang.* Refers to the degree of sexual intimacy permitted by the lady. Not to be confused with **make the running**.

**make a meal of. See make heavy weather of****make game of, *Inf.*****make fun of****make hay of*****Inf.* overthrow**

*Inf.* Make short work of. Also throw into confusion.

**make heavy weather of**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Applies to a situation where one finds something harder than anticipated. The implication is that one finds a situation very trying, and is making it unnecessarily difficult, and that one is making a big fuss over little or nothing; making a big deal out of what should have been easy going; not getting on with a relatively simple task, through bumbling stupidity. Also, **make a meal of**. Cf. **hospital job**.

**make off with*****Inf.* run through (money); squander**

*Inf.* As in *I made off with my salary in one day*. In both countries the phrase is also used to mean 'steal.'

**make old bones*****Inf.* live to a ripe old age**

*Inf.* Gloomily enough, seen almost exclusively in the negative: *He'll never make old bones*.

**make one's number with****contact**

*Inf.* The person you *make contact with* is often your opposite *number* (e.g., in another department of the government, or perhaps someone a bit senior). The implication is that of 'getting across' to someone whom it is important to be in touch with; to 'register,' as it were, to 'make your existence known.' When a naval ship spotted another sail on the horizon, the Captain *made his number* to the other ship by means of signal flags. As soon as the answering number was received, each Captain consulted his Admiralty schedule to find out which ship was senior, and therefore could take command with the right to give orders to the other.

**make out a case for****make a case for****make the running****take the lead**

*Inf.* In a competitive situation. For another kind of headway, see **make all the running**.

**make up****fill**

British **chemists** (druggists) *make up* prescriptions rather than *fill* them.

**-making**

SEE COMMENT

Hyphenated with such words as *shy-*, *shame-*, *sick-*, to create a series of mildly precious, jocularly expressive adjectives. Cf. the adjective *off-putting*, under **put (someone) off**. This construction is said to have been the invention of Evelyn Waugh.

**malicious wounding**

Term from criminal law.

**crimes of violence****man, n.****valet**

As obsolescent as the institution itself. If a woman today speaks of *my man* she presumably means 'the man I am living with.' Of course, there is also the patronizing *my good man*.

**manager, n.****producer**

In speaking of the theater, *manager* is the equivalent of *producer* in America. See also **producer**.

**managing director***approx.* **executive vice president**

In a British company, the offices of **chairman** and *managing director* can be combined in one person. This is not common and the division of functions and authority, as between these two offices, will vary from company to company, as it does between *chairman of the board* and *president* in American corporations. Roughly speaking, the *chairman* makes policy, while the *managing director* runs the show day by day. See also **chairman**.

**Manchester, n.****dry goods**

Short for *Manchester goods*, denoting cotton textile wares such as draperies, curtain materials, bedspreads, and the like. Signs reading simply MANCHESTER appear in some department stores. See also **draper's shop**.

**Mancunian, n., adj.**

## SEE COMMENT

Meaning a native or resident of Manchester. Also of Manchester. The Romans called the place *Mancunium*.

**manhandle, v.t.****handle**

The British use this the way it is used in America to mean 'handle roughly,' 'deal roughly with,' but it has also the more literal meaning in Britain shown above.

**manifesto.** See **party manifesto**.

**mankie, adj.****rotten**

*Slang.* A strong term for *quite inferior*; also spelled *mankey* and *manky*.

**man of Kent.** See under **Kentish man**.

**man of the match***approx.* **most valuable player**

The title is conferred upon the player chosen by an outside authority, usually a veteran player himself, as the best achiever in a particular match. This is the common procedure in cricket matches of special significance. Imitated in modern World Series. See **match**.

**manor, n.***Inf.* **beat**

*Inf.* In the sense of 'domain, bailiwick.' As a police usage, it is synonymous with **patch** used in this sense.

**mantelshelf, n.****mantelpiece**

The terms are used interchangeably in Britain.

**marching papers**

*Inf.* Also *marching orders*.

*Inf.* **walking papers****marg(e), n.**

*Inf.* Each country has its own way of abbreviating *oleomargarine*.

**margarine****mark, n.**

The phrase of *much this mark* means 'very much like this.' Thus a Briton might be heard to say, *At school we slept in beds of much this mark*. This use of *mark* to mean 'type' has been extended to include 'model,' as used in the expressions Mark I, Mark II, etc., especially in descriptions of new models of cars as brought out year after year.

**type (sort)****mark, v.t.**

*Inf.* A term used in **football**. In the British game, a player is said to stay close to, to *mark*, an opposing player who may be receiving the ball; in the American game that would be called *covering* the receiver.

*Inf.* **cover****market, n.**

Many British towns have a *weekly market day*, a particular day of the week on which a market, usually open-air, is held for the sale of all kinds of wares, arranged in stalls. As might be expected, these markets, which constitute normal commerce among the natives, seem like fairs to the visitor for they crackle with the festive air of a bazaar. Such a town is called a *market town*.

**weekly market****market garden**

A *market gardener* is a *truck farmer*, and *market garden* and *truck farm* are used in both countries.

**truck farm****marking name**

The broker's name, in which securities are registered for trading convenience. The true owner's name is posted in the broker's books and records.

**street name****Marks & Sparks**

*Inf.* A joke name for *Marks & Spencer*, a chain store (**multiple shop**) reminiscent of J.C. Penney. Cf. **Woollies**.

SEE COMMENT

**Mark Tapley**

One who sees only the bright side. See *Martin Chuzzlewit* by Dickens.

**Pollyanna****Marlburian, n., adj.**

Of Marlborough. Marlborough is the site of a famous **public school** in Wiltshire. An *old Marlburian* is a graduate of that school. Marlborough is pronounced MAWL-BRUH.

SEE COMMENT

**marquee, n.**

In America *marquee* generally denotes a rigid canopy projecting over the entrance to a theater or other public hall, and the word evokes the image of large illuminated letters spelling out the names of stage and movie stars, double features, and smash hits. This significance is never attributed to the word in Britain where it means a 'large tent' of the sort used on fair grounds and brings to mind Britain's agricultural fairs (see **agricultural show**), village **fêtes**, and the Henley Regatta.

**large tent**

**marriage lines**

The American term is now common in Britain.

**marriage certificate****marrow, n.**

*approx.* **squash**

A kind of oversized *zucchini*. When the British say *squash*, unless they are using it as a sports term, they mean a 'soft drink,' usually lemon squash or orange squash (see **squash**).

**martini, n.**

**vermouth**

If you ask for a *martini* in a British pub, you will probably get a glass of *vermouth*. Whether it is dry or sweet will depend upon chance, but in either event it will be warm. If you ask for a *dry martini*, you will get a glass of *dry vermouth*. If you want a *dry martini* in the American sense, better ask for a *gin and French*, specify extremely little French, and that it be served very cold, by stirring the mixture over ice cubes (formerly, **blocks of ice**), but further specify that the ice be removed (unless you want it on the rocks); and furthermore, if it would grieve you terribly not to find an olive or a piece of lemon rind in it, you had better remain in America. A *gin and it*—it being an abbreviation of *Italian vermouth*—is still occasionally ordered, but not by Americans.

**mash, n.**

**mashed potatoes**

*Inf.* More elegantly, *creamed potatoes* in Britain. A pub we know used to present *sausages and mash* in the **public bar** at three shillings and *sausages and creamed potatoes* in the **saloon bar** at four shillings, sixpence. Same dish.

**masses of, Inf.**

*Inf.* **tons of**

**master or mistress, n.**

**teacher**

Below university level. For the meaning of *Master* at the university level, see **Fellow**. A *form-master* has about the same functions as a *home-room teacher*.

**match, n.**

**game**

Two **sides** (teams) play a *match*, rather than a *game*, in Britain.

**match, test. See Test Match.****matchcard, n.**

**scorecard**

**mate, n.**

*Inf.* **buddy**

*Inf.* *Matey* or *maty* is a slang adjective for *chummy*. A *penmate* is a *pen pal*.

**mater, n.**

**mother**

*Slang.* Old-fashioned slang.

**maths, n.**

**math**

**matinee coat**

**baby coat**

**matron. See under sister.****maximus. See under major.****may, n.**

**hawthorn**

**Mayfair, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Used attributively, rather in the same way as *Park Avenue* in America, to describe mannerisms, as in, *Her accent's terribly Mayfair.*

**May Week**

SEE COMMENT

*May Week* is a Cambridge University function that lasts several days longer than a week and is celebrated in June. It is a festive period after finals are over, the principal festivities being a series of balls and *bumping-races*. *Bumping-races* are boat races among eights representing the various colleges (see **college**) in which a boat that catches up with and touches another (called *bumping*) scores a win. A *bump-supper* is held to celebrate four wins.

**maze, v.t.****bewilder**

**M.B.E.** See under **Birthday Honours.**

**M.C.** See **V.C.**

**M.D.****retarded**

*Inf.* Stands for *mentally deficient.*

**mean, adj.****stingy; petty**

In America *mean* is most commonly understood as 'cruel' and 'ill-tempered.' In Britain it means 'stingy' or 'petty,' 'ignoble.' *Mean* has an additional slang use in America, especially in jazz circles and among the youth: *He blows a mean horn.* Here, *mean* has the implication of *punishing*: something that makes a deep impression, that you won't soon forget—something that almost hurts. Curiously, the British, to express the same reaction, would say, *He blows no mean horn*, introducing a negative, and here *mean* probably signifies 'average' or 'mediocre,' its original meaning.

**means test**

SEE COMMENT

A test establishing the financial means of disabled or unemployed people in order to determine their eligibility for welfare or housing benefits. *Means-test* is used as a transitive verb meaning to 'apply a means test' to someone.

**meant to****supposed to**

A Briton asks, for instance, *Are we meant to throw rubbish in that bin?* Or he might say, *The Russians are meant to be good chess players*, i.e., *reputed to be*.

**meat.** See **mere.**

**meat and drink***Inf.* **just what the doctor ordered**

*Inf.* Or *made to order*, i.e., just the opportunity one was waiting for, particularly in a competitive situation like sports, a court trial, an election, etc.; a source of great pleasure to the protagonist, when the adversary plays into his hands, and he can pounce.

**meat-safe****food cupboard**

Built of wire mesh and fast becoming obsolete, giving way to the refrigerator. Although it is called a *meat-safe*, it can be used to preserve any food.

**mediatize, v.t.****annex**

This historical term means to 'annex a smaller country, usually a principality, to a larger one.' The former ruler retains his title and may be permitted to keep some governing rights. Hence, the expression *mediatized prince*.

**megger, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Device for the measurement of insulation resistance; from *megohm*, meaning '1,000,000 ohms.'

**Melton Mowbray pie**

SEE COMMENT

A pork pie from the town of that name in Leicestershire. Round in shape, with a covering of hard pastry made with hot, rather than the usual cold water. Taken over by a commercial bakery, these great pies don't come from Melton Mowbray any more.

**Member, n.**

SEE COMMENT

The British opposite number of a *congressman* is a *Member of Parliament*, colloquially abbreviated to *M.P.* and commonly shortened to *Member*. The area represented by *M.P.* is known as a **division** or a **constituency**.

**memorandum and articles of association****corporate charter****mend, v.t.****repair**

You may hear Britons talking about having their shoes, flat tires (**punctures**), and chairs *mended*, but their cars, plumbing, and television sets *repaired*. The distinction appears to be on the way out. Nowadays the upper classes tend to have most things *repaired* rather than *mended*, though really old-fashioned types still tend to have many things *mended*. Thus in the villages, you often hear references to the *shoe mender*, the *watch mender*, and so on. One word the British rarely use as the equivalent of *mend* or *repair* is *fix*, an Americanism.

**mental, adj.****crazy**

*Inf.* An American will speak of a disturbed person as a *mental case*. The British content themselves, informally, with the adjective alone.

**mentioned in dispatches****cited for bravery**

A military term. To be *mentioned in dispatches* is to be honored by being mentioned by name in a military report for bravery or other commendable acts of service.

**mercier, n.****textile dealer**

Usually designates an exclusive shop, dealing in expensive high-style fabrics, with the emphasis on silk.

**merchant, n.****wholesaler**

The usual implication is that he deals principally in international trade.

**merchant bank****approx. investment bank**

Specializing in the acceptance of bills of exchange in international commerce and investment in new issues.

**mere; mear, n.****lake**

Or *pond*; almost never used in America. A poetic term.

**metalled road**

The British speak of *unmetalled*, *unpaved*, *unmade*, and *dust roads*, all synonymous. *Road-metal* is a British term for the crushed stone that forms constitutes the layers of macadam roads (see **macadam**).

**paved road****metals, n. pl.**

When a train *leaves the metals* in Britain it has been *derailed*.

**rails****meteorological office**

And the much reviled official whom the Americans call the *weatherman* is the *clerk of the weather* in Britain.

**weather bureau****meths. See methylated spirit.****methylated spirit**

Usually shortened to *meths*, which is also used to refer to the unhappy derelicts who drink it.

**denatured alcohol****metricate. See metrification.****metrification, metrication, n.**

Giving rise to the verbs *metrify* and *metricate*. This process, spurred by Britain's entry into the European Community, has caused something of an upheaval in British society, especially among older people who cling to their old ways.

**adoption of metric system****metrify. See metrification.****metropolitan district**

A phrase used to express the concept of incorporation of surrounding areas into a city unit, creating a governmental subdivision larger than the old city. Americans express the same concept by the use of *Greater* as in *Greater New York*, *Greater Chicago*, etc., as do the British.

SEE COMMENT

**(the) Met(s)**

*Inf.* Short for *the Metropolitan Police*, the London police force.

**(the) London Police****Michaelmas**

(Pronounced MICKLE-M'S.) September 29, the feast of St. Michael.

SEE COMMENT

**midden, n.**

Or *dunghill*. *Kitchen midden* is used in both countries to describe a heap of seafood shells or other refuse marking the site of a prehistoric settlement.

**garbage heap****middle name**

*Inf.* In America John Henry Smith has a *first* name, a *middle* name, and a *last* name. In Britain he would commonly be said to have two *Christian* or *given* names or *forenames* and a *surname*. John Henry Samuel Smith would be said to have two *middle* names in America, three *Christian* or *given* names in Britain. The term *middle name* itself may also be used either jocularly or bitterly in both countries but usually in somewhat different ways. In America (rarely in Britain) a wife speaking of her husband's favorite dish (or sport) might say about him, *Apple pie* (or *hockey*) *is his middle name!* In Britain a person complaining of another's hypocritical conduct might say, *His middle name is Heep!* (after the knavish Uriah in *David*

*approx. Inf. nick*

*Copperfield*). The corresponding expression in America would be: *He's a regular Uriah Heep!*

**mike**, *v.i.*

**Slang. goof off**

*Slang.* To idle; also expressed by *be on the mike*.

**milk float**

**milk truck**

Light low vehicle of stately gait, required to prevent churning.

**milliard**, *n.*

**billion**

See **Appendix II.D.**

**mince**, *n.*

**chopped meat**

The common name by which a Briton orders from the butcher what an American would call *chopped meat* or *hamburger*. Sometimes the British use the term *minced meat* instead. *Mincemeat* generally means, in both countries, the mixture of chopped apples, raisins, candied orange rind, suet, etc., which goes into mince pie.

**mincemeat tart**

**mince pie**

*Mince pie* would be understood in Britain to mean a small individual one. See also **pie**.

**Mincing Lane**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* An actual street in London, which has given its name to the *tea business*, just as other London streets have become symbols and nicknames for other lines of endeavor.

**mind**, *v.t., v.i.*

**1. watch out for**

**2. care**

**3. mind you**

1. When a train stops at a curved platform at a British railroad station, there are attendants who say, or signs that read, *Mind the gap!* Where there is an unexpected step, you will be enjoined to *Mind the step*, i.e., to *watch out for* it. In *Mind you do!* *mind* means 'make sure.'

2. In America, *I don't mind* means 'I don't object.' In Britain it also means 'I don't care,' in the sense of indifference when an alternative is offered. Thus, if asked, *Would you rather stay or go?* or *Do you want chocolate or vanilla?*, a Briton who would be happy either way says, "I don't mind." See also **have no mind to**.

3. In the imperative, *mind* often omits the *you* in Britain: *I don't believe a word of it, mind!* The British do not use *mind* in the sense of *obey*. British and American parents *mind* (look after) their children. American children *mind* (or should mind, i.e., *obey*) their parents.

**minder**, *n.*

**bodyguard**

A *minder* is a *personal bodyguard*; in underworld slang, a *lookout*. Nothing to do with **child-minder**.

**mineral**, *n.*

**soft drink**

One sees **MINERALS** on signs in British restaurants, tea rooms, etc. They are offering *soft drinks*. This use of the term is related to the term *mineral water* which one still hears in America. See also **squash**.

**mingy**, *adj.**Inf.* **tight (stingy)**

*Inf.* A **portmanteau** word: combination of *mean* and *stingy*. It applies not only to persons but also to things, like a *mingy* portion of something. See also **mean**.

**mini**, *n.***Mini Minor**

The *Mini Minor*, a small car formerly produced by the British, was the origin of the popularization of the prefix *mini* to describe anything small. When used alone, as a noun, it refers to any of the various miniature skirts worn by British and American females.

**mini-budget**. See under **budget**.**minim**, *n.***halfnote**See **Appendix II.F**.**minus**. See under **major**.**minister**, *n.***cabinet member**

A term relating to government officials. The officials whom Americans describe as *cabinet members* are known as *ministers* in Britain. But not all *ministers* (in the political sense) are in the British cabinet, only the most senior ones. See also **Member**.

**minor**. See under **major**.**misfield**, *n., v.i.**approx.* **commit an error**

A cricket term, for a fielding blunder, rather than an official ruling or statistic that goes into the imperishable archives. To *misfield* is to be guilty of the blunder. See **chance**.

**missing**. See **go missing**.**miss out on****miss**

Also, *skip*. If you don't like artichokes, for instance, you *miss them out* at the dinner table. Often lengthened to *miss out on* with the same meaning: 'intentional passing up,' rather than 'missing something to one's regret.' Also, in automobile engines, meaning 'misfire.'

**mistress**. See under **master**.**mithered**, *adj.***hot and bothered**

*Inf.* Of Lancashire origin. See also **moider**. *Moithered* is heard as well.

**mixed**, *adj.***coeducational**

Applies to secondary schools, many of which are still for girls or boys only. As for the universities, they are coeducational, but some of the colleges within the universities are not, e.g., the Catholic ones at Oxford and most of the women's colleges at Oxford and Cambridge, though many colleges recently voted in favor of becoming *mixed*.

**mixed bag****assortment**

*Inf.* Of persons or things, implying a considerable variation in type or quality. In the U.S., commonly refers to a situation with both good and bad features. See **curate's egg**.

**mixture as before****same old story**

*Inf.* When you have a medical prescription renewed in Britain, the label often bears the expression "*The mixture as before.*" The phrase is jocularly applied to situations which amount to the *same old story*, as when delegates to labor negotiations or peace conferences return after an interval and present each other with nothing new.

**mizzle, n., v.i.****drizzle**

Apparently a **portmanteau** concoction of *mist* and *drizzle*.

**mobile police****patrol cars****mobile production****traveling show****mobility unit**

## SEE COMMENT

Public housing adapted to meet the needs of handicapped persons.

**mod. cons.** See under **amenities**.**moderations, n. pl.**

## SEE COMMENT

First exams for B.A. degree especially in classics at Oxford. Often abbreviated to *mods*. The examiner is called a *moderator*. See also **Greats; respensions; smalls**.

**moderator, n.**

## SEE COMMENT

1. Officer presiding over math tripos. See **tripos**.
2. Examiner for moderations. See **moderations**.
3. Presbyterian minister presiding over church group.

**mog, moggy, moggie, n.****cat**

*Inf.* A *kittycat*, especially one without a pedigree. If one were distinguishing between a Burmese of venerable ancestry and a garden variety pussycat, one might be tempted to characterize the latter as 'just a moggy,' but it would be preferable to eliminate the 'just' in all other cases. *Mog, moggy*, etc. are highly respectable designations, even if they are corruptions of *mongrel*.

**moider, v.t.****bother**

*Inf.* *Moidered* is north of England dialect for *hot and bothered*. See also **mithered**.

**molehill, n.****little hill**

Small hill thrown up by a burrowing mole.

**Mondayish, adj.**

## SEE COMMENT

Describing the feelings of one facing the prospect of the week's work ahead, after the festivities or relaxation of the weekend. Applies as well to a clergyman weary as a result of his Sabbath labors.

**money for jam***Inf.* **easy pickings**

*Inf.* Like taking candy from a baby. Description of a task embarrassingly easy. See also **easy meat; piece of cake; as easy as kiss your hand; snip**. Sometimes *money for jam* appears to mean 'something for nothing,' in the sense of a good return for negligible effort. Synonymous, in this sense, with *money for old rope*.

**money for old rope.** See **money for jam**.

**money-spinning**, *n., adj.*

1. **money raising**

2. **moneymaking**

1. A *money-spinning* event is one that enriches the treasury of a do-good organization.

2. A *money-spinning* play is simply a hit that is raking it in. A *money spinner* is a *money maker*, anything that makes money, a financial success. See also **word-spinning**.

**monger**, *n.*

**dealer**

This word is almost always used in combination with the word that denotes the particular trade involved. Examples: *cheesemonger*, *fishmonger*, *ironmonger* (for hardware merchant). The usual practice is to put an apostrophe *s* after the combination word: *I'm going to the fishmonger's*; *I have to get my lamp repaired at the ironmonger's*. *Monger* fits into other combinations of a derogatory nature: *scandalmonger*, *warmonger*, and the new pejorative term *peacemonger*, for a *dove*.

**monkey**, *n., Slang.*

\$500; £500

**monkey-freezing**, *adj.*

*Inf.* **biting cold**

*Slang.* Euphemistic ellipsis of *cold enough to freeze the balls off a brass monkey*. Cf. **as cold as charity**.

**monkey-nut**, *n.*

**peanut**

Synonymous with **ground-nut** and thought by some to be slang or at least mildly jocular.

**monomark**, *n.*

**registered identification mark**

An arbitrary symbol, consisting of letters, numbers, or both, for purposes of identification.

**mooch**. See **mouch**.

**moonlight flit**

**skipping town**

*Inf.* To do a *moonlight flit* (or **shoot the moon**) in Britain is to *blow town at night* with your belongings, with no forwarding address, in order to get away without paying the rent or settling with your creditors. It is like *doing a bunk* (see **bunk**), but at night.

**moonraker**, *n.*

*Slang.* **yokel**

*Inf.* The legend is that certain Wiltshire hayseeds pretended to rake the moon out of a pond, mistaking the moon's reflection for a piece of cheese. In fact, they were trying to gather in their kegs of brandy.

**moons**, *n., pl.*

*Inf.* **ages**

*Slang.* *I haven't seen him in moons*. See also **donkey's years**.

**moonshine**, *n.*

*Inf.* **castles in the air**

*Inf.* *Visionary ideas*. These can result from imbibing *moonshine* in the American sense.

**moor**, *n.*

**wasteland**

Open and overgrown, often with heather. See also **heath**.

**mop up**

That which Frenchmen do in public, and most other nationalities do in private, in order to gather up that irresistible last bit of gravy on the plate.

**morally certain**

About 90 percent certain: almost convinced, much stronger than *reasonably sure*.

**moreish, adj.**

*Inf.* Used of food. See **-ish**.

**makes one want more****more power to your elbow, *Inf.***

A jocular toast of encouragement to a boozier.

***Inf.* more power to you****morning coffee. See elevenses.****morning tea**

SEE COMMENT

In British country hotels, one is asked, "Will you be wanting morning tea?" Before you go down to breakfast, the **chambermaid** will bring you a cup.

**morris dance**

SEE COMMENT

A ritual folk dance performed all over England, usually during May Day ceremonies, by persons in costumes representing set characters said to refer back to the legend of Robin Hood. The term *morris* is a corruption of *Moorish*.

**mortarboard. See academics.****most secret****top secret****Mothering Sunday****Mid-Lent Sunday**

Fourth Sunday in Lent, called *Laetare Sunday* because on that Sunday the *introit* in the Latin Mass began *Laetare Jerusalem* ('Rejoice, Jerusalem'). The British name was derived from the custom of children bringing small gifts to their mothers on that day—the original Mother's Day.

**mother-in-law, *n.***

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* An old joke; a way of asking for an *old and bitter* (*ale* understood). Not current.

**mother's ruin****gin**

*Inf.* A nickname for *gin*. Much deplored and much drunk.

**motion, *n.*****bowel movement****motor, *v.i.*****drive**

The British also use *drive*, but no American other than William Buckley would ever say, "We *motored* across the country."

**motor-bike, *n.*****motorcycle**

*Inf.* Now usually shortened to *bike*, which also means 'bicycle.'

**motor coach****intercity bus**

Usually shortened to *coach*.

**motorway, *n.*****turnpike**

**mouch; mooch, v.i.**

*Inf. hang around*  
Slang. Both forms rhyme with HOOCH. To *mouch round* or *mouch about* a place is to *hang around* it or just *hang*.

**mount, n., v.t.**

Term used in framing, *mount* a picture.

**mat**

**mousetrap cheese**

*approx. Slang. rat cheese*  
Slang. Describes any humble type of hard cheese, like Cheddar and Lancashire (as opposed, for example, to Stilton and the fancier numbers). Usually the word implies a left-over bit, going somewhat stale, but edible; something you'd be willing to offer an old friend who dropped in, but not the vicar.

**move house**

The British occasionally use the shorter American form for *change residence*; but see **Appendix I.A.3**.

**move**

**moving stairway**

Interchangeable with *moving staircase*, and the British are familiar with *escalator* as well.

**escalator**

**M.P. See Member.**

**Mrs Grundy. See wowser.**

**Mrs Mop or Mopp**

*Inf. Mrs Mopp (two ps) was a character in the interminable radio program It's That Man Again (familiarily known as ITMA) during World War II. Her oft-repeated line was, Can I do you now, sir?*

**cleaning woman**

**much of this mark. See under mark.**

**muck, n., v.i.**

*Slang. The British government makes a muck of things, in about the same way the American government makes a mess of things, and in the same way in which all the other governments seem to be making whatever-it-is-they-call-it these days. Whereas Americans mess around, Britons muck about. To muck in is to pitch in, with the connotation that the task in question is a menial one. To be in a muck sweat about something is to be upset about it, deeply concerned and worried.*

**mess**

**mucker, n.,**

1. *Slang. To come a mucker is to take a spill.*

2. *Slang. To go a mucker is to go on a spending spree or throw your money around.*

1. *Slang. spill*  
2. *spending spree*

**mudlark, n.**

*approx. scavenger*  
Of a special sort: a person—usually a child—who searches the mudflats between high and low tide for whatever may be found in the way of flotsam or jetsam.

**muff, n.**

*Inf. Muff is used in both countries as a verb meaning 'miss.' One can muff any kind of opportunity, in life generally. In sports, one muffs a catch. From this the British developed the noun muff, meaning 'awkward, rather silly person.' Appar-*

**oaf**

ently, however, in context, it can be used almost as a term of endearment, as in, *What a silly little muff you are!*

**muffetee, n.**

**knitted wrist cuff**

**muffin, n.**

**small spongy cake**

This has nothing whatever in common with what Americans call *English muffins*, which are unknown in Britain. Instead, it is a light, flat, round, spongy cake, served toasted and buttered.

**mug, n., v.i.**

**1. Slang. gullible person**

**2. Slang. grind; bookworm**

**3. face**

1. *Slang.* To be *had for a mug* is to be *taken in*, i.e., taken for a *dope*. A *mug's game* is *something for the birds*; *my idea of nothing at all*; *a profitless endeavor*.

2. *Slang.* The British also use *mug* and *mug up* verbally, meaning 'bone up,' e.g., for an examination (see also **sap**; **swot**).

3. *Slang.* Anybody's face.

**muggins, n.**

*Slang.* **simpleton; fool**

**mull, n., v.t., v.i.**

**mess; mess up**

To *mull* (or *mull over*) in America is to *ponder* or *cogitate*, an activity that often winds up in a *mull* in the British sense.

**multiple shops**

**chain store**

**multi-storey, adj.**

**high rise**

Note the *e* in storey. See **Appendix I.E.**

**mummy, mum, n.**

**mama; mommy**

*Mummy* and *mama* start in childhood, but *mummy* lingers on longer in Britain than *mama* does in America, where it usually becomes *mother*. The Queen Mother is facetiously called the *Queen Mum* and sometimes, affectionately, *Queenie Mum*.

**mump, v.t.**

*Slang.* **cadge**

*Slang.* Archaic. To *mump* something is to get it by begging, to *cadge* or *wheedle* it out of someone. *Mumping* is a British police term for accepting minor gifts from people on the beat.

**muniment room**

SEE COMMENT

The storage and/or display room of a castle or church or other ancient monument where historical records and treasures are kept. A *muniment* is a document listing items in archive.

**music centre**

SEE COMMENT

Combination record-player, cassette player, and radio. See also **radiogram**.

**music-hall, n.**

**vaudeville theater**

A *music-hall turn* is a *vaudeville act*. **Variety** is a usual British term for *vaudeville*.

**muslin**, *n.*

**cheesecloth**

See also **butter-muslin**; **calico**.

**mustard-keen**, *adj.*

**enthusiastic**

*Inf.* Also, *keen as mustard*. This phrase involves a pun on Keen's Mustard, a popular product.

**muzz**, *v.t.*, *Slang*. See **muzzy**.

**muzzy**, *adj.*

*Slang.* **woozy**

*Slang.* The implication in *muzzy* is that the unfortunate condition it describes is the result of too much drink. The slang British verb *muzz*, used transitively, means to 'put somebody *hors de combat*,' not in one fell swoop by slipping him a mickey, but in nice, easy stages.

**My dear** . . .

**Dear** . . .

In America, the addition of *My* in the salutation of a letter makes it more formal; in Britain, more intimate.

**my old dutch**. See **dutch**.

# N

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**N/A** **not applicable**  
Abbreviation used in filling out forms; for instance, the blank space for *maiden name*, in a form being completed by a male.

**NAAFI, n.** SEE COMMENT  
(Pronounced NAFFY or NAHFY.) Standing for *Navy, Army, and Air Force Institutes*, an organization that operates canteens and service centers for members of the British armed forces, similar to an American PX.

**naff, v.i., adj.** SEE COMMENT  
*Slang.* Anything *naff* is shabby or cheap, or **tatty**. *Naff off!* is the equivalent of *Bugger off!* (see **bugger**), or in America, *Fuck off!*

**nailed on, Slang.** *Slang.* **nailed down; all set**

**nail varnish** **nail polish**  
Also given as *nail polish* and *nail enamel*.

**nanny, n.** **child's nurse**

**nap, n.** *Inf.* **tip (on the races)**  
*Inf.* To *go nap* is to *bet your stack*. A *nap selection* is a racing expert's list of betting recommendations. *Nap* is an abbreviation of *napoleon* (lower case *n*), a card game in which players bid for the right to name the trump, declaring the number of tricks they propose to win. A *nap* or *napoleon* in this game is a bid to take all five tricks, the maximum. *Nap hand* has acquired the figurative meaning of being in the position where one is practically sure of winning big if willing to take the risk. See also **pot, 1**.

**napper, n., Slang.** *Slang.* **noodle (head)**  
Synonymous with **loaf; noddle**.

**nappy, n.** **diaper**  
*Inf.* A diminutive of *napkin*, and the everyday word for *diaper*, which is also heard in Britain.

**nark, n.** *Slang.* **stool pigeon**  
*Slang.* Originally *copper's nark*, i.e., *informant*. Jocularly and pejoratively extended to the publishing business, where a *publisher's nark* means a 'publicity man.' *Nark* is not related to the American term *nark* or *narc* meaning 'federal narcotics agent.' The British term came from the Romany word *nak* (pronounced NAHK) meaning 'nose.'

**narked, adj.** *Slang.* **sore**  
*Slang.* In the sense of 'angry.'

**narky**, *adj.* *Slang.*

*Slang.* **bitchy**

**nasty**, *adj.*

**disagreeable**

In Britain, *nasty* means disgustingly dirty; obscene; unpalatable. *Nasty* (usually in the plural) has been used to mean 'gremlin' or 'bug' in the sense of 'defect' in computer programs. *Nasties* was a facetious name for *Nazis* in the thirties and forties.

**nasty piece (bit) of work**

*Slang.* **louse**

*Inf.* A contemptible person.

**National Assistance.** See **National Insurance.**

**National Health Service**

**socialized medicine**

See also **health visitor.**

**National Insurance**

**Government Insurance System**

State-regulated compensation to the sick, aged, and unemployed based on a system of compulsory contributions from workers and employers, including certain supplementary benefits formerly known as *National Assistance*.

**nation of shopkeepers.** See under **shop.**

**natter**, *n., v.i.*

**chatter**

*Inf.* As a verb, it can mean 'grumble,' but this sense appears to be increasingly less common. *Nattering* on the High Street as one meets neighbors is what makes shopping such a pleasure and wastes so much time. Don't be misled by *natterjack*, which is not a male gossip but rather a *Buto calamita*, a yellow striped toad indigenous to Britain.

**naturist**, *n.*

**nudist**

And *naturism* is *nudism*.

**naught.** See **nought.**

**naughty**, *adj.*

**wicked**

In both countries, *naughty* is a word usually associated with children. It is also heard in Britain in adult contexts, but usually as an exercise in jocular understatement which seems somewhat affected, thus (referring to a particularly bloodthirsty murder): *That was a naughty thing to do.* Obscene words are rather coyly called *naughty words* in both countries, but in Britain the usual term would be *rude*. See **rude**, 3.

**navvy**, *n.*

**construction worker**

Especially a road, railway, or canal worker. A *gang of navvies* is a *construction crew*. This term is unknown in America, where it would more likely be given as *hardhat*. See also **lengthman**.

**N.B.G.**

**no damned good**

*Inf.* The jocular abbreviation of *no bloody good*.

**near-side lane**

Since traffic keeps to the left in Britain, and the *near* refers to the edge of the road, the *near-side lane* refers to the leftmost one for regular driving. The one nearest the center is called the *off-side lane*, and is used for passing. The terms *near-side* and *off-side* can also refer to the sides of a vehicle: e.g., the *off-side front wheel*.

**slow lane**

**near the bone.** See **near the knuckle**.

**near the knuckle**

*Inf.* *Bordering on the indecent.* Synonymous with **near the bone**.

*Inf.* **off color**

**neat, adj.**

Referring to undiluted alcoholic beverages. Some Americans say *neat*; some Britons say *straight*.

**straight****neck, n.**

*Inf.* In the sense of 'cheek' or 'gall' or 'impudence.' Often found in the expression *brass neck*.

*Inf.* **nerve**

**neck and crop**

*Inf.* *Headlong, bodily.* The way people get thrown out of barrooms in western movies.

**headfirst****(the) needle, n.**

*Slang.* The kind of nervousness one gets when kept in suspense.

**pins and needles****needle match**

A game or match that is hotly contested, with a background involving a certain amount of acrimony. A county cricket match between arch-rivals is said to *have a lot of needle*.

**grudge match****nervous nineties, Inf.**

In cricket, it is a signal accomplishment for a **batsman** to make 100 runs, known as a **century**. As he approaches this desideratum, a batsman sometimes tightens up, and when he makes his 90th run, becomes understandably nervous, or, as the British say, **nervy**. At this point, he is said to be *in the nervous nineties*. The term has been extended to other sports, as in the case of a **football** (soccer) team leading its league towards the end of the season or to any situation where the protagonist is close to triumph, but with pitfalls looming.

SEE COMMENT

**nervy**

*Slang.* Britons express themselves as feeling *nervy* or describe someone as looking *nervy*. In each case, the American equivalent would be *jumpy*. In other words, a *nervy* person in Britain can be *jumpy* or *wearing*, depending on the context.

*Slang.* **jumpy**

**(the) never-never, n.**

*Slang.* The serious British equivalent for *installment plan* is **hire-purchase**. The *never-never* is popular, wistful, jocular slang.

**installment plan****Newmarket, n.**

Newmarket is a horseracing town. It is also the name of a card game. A *Newmarket* or *Newmarket coat* is a *tightfitting overcoat* for men or women.

SEE COMMENT

**new penny.**

See **Appendix II.A.**

**newsagent, n.**

See also **kiosk, 1.**

**newsdealer**

**news editor, n.**

For British use of *city editor*, see under **City**.

**city editor**

**newsreader, n.**

Often shortened to *reader* on radio and TV.

**newscaster**

**news-room, n.**

The reading room in a library where newspapers and magazines are kept. *News-room* in America, *news-room* in Britain, are newspaper terms referring to the news section of a newspaper office or a radio or television station.

**periodical room**

**New Town.** See under **overspill**.

**New Year Honours.** See under **Birthday Honours**

**next turning.** See under **block**.

**nice bit of work**

*Slang.* Other complimentary slang in the same vein: *nice bit of crumpet* (see **crumpet**); *nice bit of stuff*; *nice bit of skirt*. Apparently, *a nice bit of* almost anything would do. *Nice bit* is often *nice piece* in these expressions. See also **bit of . . .**; **nasty piece (bit) of work**.

*Slang.* **quite a dish**

**nice to hear you**

A common telephone phrase. Americans say, *How nice to hear your voice*, or *How good to hear from you*.

**nice to hear your voice**

**nick, n.**

**1. station house**

**2. Inf. shape**

1. *Slang.* Police station, also prison.

2. In the sense of 'physical condition.' Usually in the phrase *in the nick*, sometimes *in good nick*, meaning 'in the pink.'

**nick, v.t.**

*Slang.* In both senses: to *steal* something, or to *arrest* someone.

*Slang.* **pinch**

**nicker, n.**

*Slang.* Unit of currency, not weight. Low-class, petty criminals' cant. The common slang term is **quid**. See also **knickers**.

**a pound**

**nide, n.**

**brood of pheasants**

**night-cellar, n., Slang.**

*Slang.* **dive**

**night on the tiles**

*Slang.* This phrase is derived from the custom among cats of having fun at night on rooftops, which in Britain are often made of tiles.

*Slang.* **night on the town**

**night sister.** See **sister**.

**night watchman**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Cricket term. If a player is out just before close of play on a given day, a weak **batsman** is put in at that point, out of batting order, to preserve the stronger batsman. The poor chap who probably will be out early the next day is called the *night watchman*.

**nil, n.**

**nothing**

Used in game scores where Americans would use *nothing*, e.g., *six goals to nil*, except in cricket, where *nought* is the term.

**nineteen to the dozen**

*Slang.* **a blue streak**

*Inf.* Usually seen in the expression *talk nineteen to the dozen*, talk incessantly. See also **talk the hind leg off a donkey**.

**nipper, n.**

*Inf.* **kid, tot**

*Slang.* See also **limb**.

**nippy, adj., n.**

1. *adj., Slang.* **snappy**

2. *n.* **waitress**

1. *adj. Slang.* Look *nippy!* means *Make it snappy!*

2. *n., Slang.* As a noun, *nippy* is slang for *waitress*. The term was confined originally to the nimble girls at Lyons Corner Houses (a restaurant chain), but then became generic. *Nippy* is just about on its way out except in the sense of 'chillingly cold.'

**nip round**

*Inf.* **pop over**

*Inf.* One *nips round* to the pub for a quick **pint**. One can *nip up* as well as *round*. To *nip up* somewhere is to make a hurried trip there and back.

**nit, n.**

*Slang.* **dope; jerk**

*Slang.* Short for *nitwit*. Also in America and Britain, meaning the egg of a louse or other parasitic insect.

**nix!, interj.**

*Slang.* **cheese it!**

*Slang.* *Nix!* is an interjection used in Britain to warn one's colleagues that the boss is snooping around. As in America, it is used also to signify a strong *No!*, i.e., *Nothing doing!* *Cheese it!* (or *Cheezit!*) has become rather old-fashioned in America. There would seem to be no modern equivalent, perhaps because people are so much less afraid of the boss these days. *Look busy!* or *look smart!* is probably the closest equivalent.

**nob, n., Slang.**

*Slang.* **a swell**

He sure plays the *nob*, don't he.

**nobble, v.t.**

1. **tamper with**

2. *Slang.* **fix**

3. **scrounge**

4. *Slang.* **nab**

5. *Slang.* **rat on**

*Slang.* Sometimes spelled *knobble*. In any of its meanings, an unpleasant bit of British slang:

1. One *nobbles* a racehorse to prevent its winning.
2. One *nobbles* a jury to get the desired verdict.
3. *Nobble* also means "scrounge," with the implication of getting something away from somebody through sly, dishonest maneuvering.
- 4,5. To *nobble* a criminal is to *nab* him, or get him *nabbed* by *ratting on* him.

**noddle, n.**

*Slang.* **noodle (head)**

*Slang.* Often shortened to *nod*. Synonymous with **loaf**; **napper**.

**no effects**

**insufficient funds**

Banking term; for the more up-to-date term, see **refer to drawer**.

**No Entry**

**Do Not Enter**

Road sign indicating one-way street.

**nog, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Strong ale, once brewed in East Anglia; sometimes spelled *nogg*. In America *nog* is used as short for *egg nog* and refers to any alcoholic drink into which an egg is beaten.

**no hoarding.** See **hoarding**.

**no joy**

*Inf.* **no luck**

*Inf.* Words announcing *no success* in any of life's small endeavors, when you vainly try to reach someone by dialing one number after another, or when you call a box office and find tickets are sold out.

**nonconformist, n., adj.**

**non-Anglican**

As a noun, synonymous with **dissenter**. See also **chapel**.

**non-content, n.**

*approx.* **nay-voter**

One who votes against a motion in the House of Lords.

**nonillion.** See **Appendix II.D.**

**non-resident, n.**

*approx.* **transient**

One may see a sign in front of a British hotel reading MEALS SERVED TO NON-RESIDENTS, or words to that effect. In that use, *non-resident* is used in the sense of a 'person not living at the hotel,' and has nothing to do with national domicile.

**(a) nonsense, n.**

**(a) muddle; fiasco**

Preceded by the indefinite article, especially in the expression *make a nonsense of*. In describing a military embarkation that went wrong and turned into a fiasco, a character may say, "It was all rather a *nonsense*."

**non-U**

See **Appendix I.C.6.**

**no reply**

**no answer**

A telephone term. In America the operator exasperates you by saying, *They don't answer*. In Britain the unhappy formula is *There's no reply*. See also **ceased to exist**.

**Norfolk capon**

*Inf.* **red herring**

*Inf.* A false issue.

**Norfolk dumpling**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Norfolk type, synonymous with *Norfolk turkey*, meaning a native of the country of Norfolk.

**Norfolk sparrow**

pheasant

*Inf.* So called because pheasant are plentiful in the area.

**norland, n.**

north

*Norland* is a common noun and is simply short for *northland*.

**North Country.** See under **West Country**.

**nose to tail, Inf.***Inf.* bumper to bumper**nosey-parker, n., v.i.***Inf.* busybody

*Inf.* When used as a verb, it means to 'be a rubberneck' or 'be a busybody' and take much too great an interest in other people's affairs. This term is said to have alluded to Dr. Matthew Parker, a 16th-century Archbishop of Canterbury who was once chaplain to Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII. A religious fanatic, he stuck his nose into every aspect of church affairs.

**(is) not a patch on***Inf.* doesn't hold a candle to

*Inf.* Doesn't come anywhere near; isn't in the same league with.

**not a sausage***Slang.* not a damned thing

*Slang.* Usually refers to money.

**Not at all****You're welcome**

The American term used to sound peculiar to British ears. *You're welcome* is now heard increasingly, undoubtedly as a result of its constant use by American visitors. In small matters, the British often say nothing at all (to the surprise of most Americans, some of whom mistakenly consider the silence somewhat rude) in response to *Thank you*. In more important matters, they say *Not at all!* or *That's all right!* A warmer response is *Pleasure!* *Thank you*, incidentally, is heard all the time from persons serving you, like waiters and waitresses, salespersons, tailors taking your measurements, and the like. It is sometimes so often repeated that it seems more like a nervous tic than a spoken phrase. *Thank you!* from a porter pushing a baggage cart (**trolley**, in Britain) is the equivalent of *Gangway!* See **Pleasure!** Americans are told *ad nauseam* to *have a good day*.

**not best pleased****not too happy****not by a long chalk, Inf.***Inf.* not by a long shot

Britons waste their time playing various pool and billiard games, while Americans profit from shooting baskets and clay pigeons.

**note, n.**

1. bill

2. tone

1. Referring to paper money: a 5-pound *note*, a 10-pound *note*, and so forth.
2. In musical terminology, the English use the term *note* in instances where Americans would use *tone*. Examples: 3 *notes* lower; 5-*note* scale. When an Englishman uses *tone* in such expressions, he means what the Americans would call a *whole tone*.

**notecase, n.**See also **pocketbook**.**billfold****not half****1. not nearly****2. not at all****3. terrifically**One must be extremely careful in interpreting the expression *not half*:1. *Inf.* When a Briton says to a departing guest, "You haven't stayed *half long enough*," he means *not nearly long enough*.2. *Inf.* When a Briton gives his opinion of his friend's new necktie by describing it as *not half bad*, he means 'not at all bad,' i.e., 'quite satisfactory,' 'pretty good.'3. *Slang.* *Not half* has a peculiar slang use as well. Thus, in describing the boss's reaction when he came in and found everybody out to lunch, a British porter might say, "He didn't half blow up," meaning that he did blow up about as completely as possible. In other words, *not half* is used ironically, meaning 'not half—but totally.' As an expletive, by itself, *not half!* might find its American equivalent in *not much!* meaning, of course, the exact opposite: 'very much!' 'and how!' as in, *Would you like a free trip to California? Not half!***nothing (else) for it****unmistakably***There's no choice, no other way out or nothing else to do about it.***nothing starchy***Inf.* **no fuss or feathers***Slang.* See **starchy**.**nothing to make a song about, *Inf.****Inf.* **nothing to write home about****notice, v.t.****review**In Britain a book can be spoken of as *reviewed* or *noticed*. *Noticed* implies that the review was brief.**notice board****bulletin board**For instance, the one at railroad stations listing arrivals and departures. See also **hoarding**.**not much cop***Slang.* **no great catch***Slang.* *Not worth much*; referring to persons or objects of little or no value.**not on****1. impracticable****2. *Inf.* bad form**1. *Inf.* An employee asks to have his salary doubled. Answer: "It simply isn't on."2. *Inf.* Denoting impropriety.**not on your nelly***Slang.* **no way!***Slang.* From rhyming slang (see **Appendix II.G.3.**), *not on your Nelly Duff* (whoever she was), the rhyme being with *puff*, old slang for 'life.'**not so dusty***Inf.* **not so bad***Inf.* In answer to the question *How are you?***Not to worry!, *Inf.****Inf.* **Don't let it bother you! No problem!**

**nought (naught), n.****zero**

It is used in scoring—*ten to nought*. In that sense Americans would probably use *nothing* instead of *zero*. As a term in arithmetic, a British synonym is **cipher**, also spelled *cypher*.

**noughts and crosses****tick-tack-toe****nous, n.****savvy**

It looks French, but is the Greek word for ‘mind’ or ‘intellect’ and rhymes with **HOUSE**. It can also mean ‘gumption.’

**nowt.** See **nought**.**nr.****near**

A term used on envelopes in addressing letters: thus, Sandhurst, *nr.* Hawkhurst, to differentiate that Sandhurst from the Sandhurst in Surrey. See also **Appendix I.D.9**.

**nullity, n.****annulment**

Term in matrimonial law. If an American can't stand his or her spouse but has no grounds for divorce, a lawyer can look into the chances of obtaining an *annulment*. A British lawyer would determine whether there are grounds for a *nullity suit*. But they are doing the same thing.

**number.** See **make one's number**.**number plate****license plate****Number 10 Downing Street**

SEE COMMENT

Usually shortened to *No. 10*. The seat of executive power and residence of the prime minister. Like *the White House*, it is not only an address but is also used figuratively to refer to the chief executive's office.

**nurse, v.t.****fondle**

A use not met with in America: to hold a baby on one's lap caressingly. The verb is also used to describe the attentions of a politician to his constituency to convince the voters of his devotion to their interests.

**nursing home****private hospital**

Also *convalescent home*. *Nursing home* is heard more and more in America.

**nut-case, n.***Slang.* **nut**

*Slang.* The Americans refer to a crazy person as a *case* or a *nut*.

**nut, do one's.** See **do one's nut**.**nutter, n.***Slang.* **nut**

*Slang.* A crazy character: synonymous with **nut-case**.

**O.A.P.***approx. senior citizen; retiree*

*Inf.* Stands for *old age pensioner*, and refers to those entitled to draw old age pensions from the government; in addition they are granted reductions in certain public conveyance fares, prices of admission to some entertainments, sports events, and the like, a practice not unknown in America. The British are now replacing *O.A.P.* with *pensioner*, and occasionally with the unattractive euphemism *Senior Citizen*.

**oast, n.****hops kiln**

The *oast* (the hop-drying *kiln* itself) is housed in an *oast-house*, a red brick tower almost always cylindrical like a silo. The *oast-house* is topped by a cone-shaped vented cap, painted white, which is rotated by the action of the wind pushing against a protruding vane. The part of southeastern England known as the *Weald*, particularly the hilly Kent and Sussex countryside, is dotted with hundreds of these structures, usually single but often in pairs or clusters of several, lending a special character to the landscape.

**oats, n. pl.****oatmeal (uncooked)**

The proper term when you shop at the grocery. Cooked and on the breakfast table, it is **porridge**.

**obbo.** See **keep obbo on**.

**O.B.E.** See under **Birthday Honours**.

**oblique, n.****slash**

Sometimes called *oblique stroke* or simply *stroke* in Britain, and many names in America, including *virgule*, *diagonal*, *slant*, and even *solidus*, the latter being the Latin ancestor of *shilling*, a reference to the *shilling stroke*, as it was sometimes called in Britain in the old days before the monetary system was changed, when the *stroke* meant 'shilling(s).' Thus: 15/- meant '15 shillings.' See **Appendix II.A**.

**O.C.****Officer Commanding**

Subordinate to the C.O., who commands an established group such as an infantry battalion, while an O.C. commands an *ad hoc* unit such as a demolition training center, a rations dump, an intelligence group, etc.

**occupier, n.****occupant**

In Britain one who occupies a house is its *occupier*. One occupying a room, railroad compartment, etc., is an *occupant* in both countries. *Occupier* always refers to a dwelling. When the occupier owns the house, he is called *owner-occupier*.

**octillion.** See **Appendix II.D.**

**odd, adj.**

1. **peculiar**  
2. **occasional**

1. *Odd* is used much more in Britain than in America to describe an eccentric person. The British, generally speaking, like to regard themselves as *odd* in that sense.

2. *The odd* is the equivalent of an *occasional*, in sentences like *He makes the odd trip to town*, or, *I work mainly in my office, but do have the odd meeting with a client elsewhere*, or, *The odd novice will chance swimming in these dangerous waters*.

**odd man, n.**

**handyman**

**oddments, n. pl.**

**odds and ends**

Especially applied to broken sets of merchandise for sale. Used in America not with the British meaning, but two others: *oddities*, strange people or things; and *eccentricities*.

**odd sizes**

**broken sizes**

Not all sizes available, referring to merchandise for sale.

**off, n.**

**start**

*Inf.* For instance, the start of a horse race or a TV program. *It was ten minutes before the off.*

**off, adj.**

1. **bad form**  
2. **spoiled**

1. *Inf.* Thus: *It was a bit off to be doing her nails at the restaurant table*. Synonymous with **not on**, 2.

2. *Inf.* In the sense of 'rancid' or 'rotten,' referring to spoiled food. Thus: *The butter's gone off*.

**offal, n.**

**viscera**

A butcher's term covering liver, kidneys, tongue, etc., or animal insides generally.

**off cut**

**remnant**

Store sign: RETAIL OFF CUT CENTRE would read REMNANTS in America as applied to textiles, and probably ODD LENGTHS referring to lumber, etc. *Off cut* refers primarily to lumber, but can apply to textiles, carpeting, pipe, etc.

**offer for sale**

**secondary issue**

Of stock.

**offer for subscription**

**public issue**

Of stock. Today commonly called I.P.O., initial public offering. See also **offer for sale**.

**offer-up, v.t.**

**put in place**

In instructions for a plastic substance for making screw fixings in masonry: *After inserting the material into the masonry opening, one is to "... offer-up the fixture and drive home the screw."*

**office block.** See **block**.

**offices, n. pl.**

Synonymous with another British word which has a meaning unknown in America—**amenities** in the sense of *conveniences*, as applied to a house. A real-estate agents' term: *All the usual offices*, i.e., electricity, hot and cold running water, kitchen, lavatory, etc. See discussion under **amenities**.

**official, n.**

For example, *bank official*.

**officer****off licence****1. license to sell bottled alcoholic beverages****2. package store**

1. Sign on shop indicating it can sell liquor all day long for consumption off the premises. See under **during hours**.

2. The shop itself.

**off-load, v.t.****1. Slang. bump****2. Inf. saddle**

1. *Inf.* To *displace* an ordinary airplane passenger in favor of a VIP, a very important person.

2. In the sense of 'passing the buck,' i.e., *saddling* someone with an undesirable burden.

**off one's chump; off one's dot; off one's onion, Slang.**     *Slang.* **off one's rocker**

**off one's own bat****on one's own**

*Inf.* Used in expressions indicating doing things without the help of anybody else. A term derived from cricket. See also **on one's pat, on one's tod**, both meaning 'being alone.'

**off-putting.** See **put (someone) off**.

**off-side lane****passing lane**

See under **near-side lane**.

**off the boil****past the crisis**

*Inf.* When a situation is *off the boil*, it is coming under control, calming down, past the crisis stage.

**off the mark****having made a start**

Technically, a cricket term. To be *off the mark* is to have made your first run after coming to bat. In general language, it means 'off to a start,' signifying at least initial success. See also **slow off the mark**.

**off-the-peg, adj., Inf.***Inf.* **off the rack; ready-to-wear****of that ilk**

## SEE COMMENT

This curious phrase, as used in Scotland, has an extremely restricted sense. It applies to persons whose last names are the same as the name of the place they come from; historically they were chiefs of clans. From a misunderstanding of this usage, *ilk* has acquired the meaning 'sort,' or 'kind'; used generally in a pejorative sense: *Al Capone, and people of that ilk*, or even *Freudians and their ilk*.

## ... of the best

## 1. strokes

## 2. pound note(s)

1. *Inf.* To give a schoolboy *five of the best* is to give him *five strokes of the cane*.  
 2. *Inf.* A much pleasanter meaning: *A thousand of the best* is £1,000. The context will cure any possible ambiguity.

**old, adj.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Used especially in addressing intimates, coupled with a variety of nouns, thus: *old man, old chap, old bean, old thing, old fruit, old egg, old top*, but *old boy* (not as a form of address) has the special meaning of 'alumnus' (see **old boy**). All old-fashioned.

**(the) Old Bill**Slang. **(the) cops**

Slang. Newish underworld usage. *Watch it! Here comes the Old Bill!*

**old boy; old girl****alumnus; alumna**

*Inf.* In the frame of reference of secondary education, *old boy* would be *alumnus* or *graduate* in America. When you get to the university level, *old boy* no longer applies. At **Oxbridge**, the British would refer to a graduate as an *Oxford (Cambridge) man (woman)* or *graduate*, or say, simply, "He (she) was at Oxford (Cambridge)." It would remain *alumnus* or *graduate* in America in formal terms, but *old grad* colloquially. The *old-boy net* or *network* refers to the bonds established among the boys at **public school**, which are supposed to operate throughout life in social, and, particularly, in business and professional life. Related, of course, to the *old school tie*, in which the *tie* appears to be an accidental pun referring to both the necktie displaying the school colors and the connections establishing the upper-class kinship characteristic of British public school boys.

**old cock****old man**

Slang. Used vocatively, with *cock* being a synonym for rooster: 'Look here, *old cock*, maybe I can help you.' See also **old**.

**old dutch.** See under **dutch**.

**Old Lady of Threadneedle Street**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* *Bank of England*; the expression is derived from its address.

**old man of the sea**

SEE COMMENT

A person one cannot shake off. From the legend of *Sinbad the Sailor*.

**old mossyface, adj.****the ace of spades****old party***Inf.* **old-timer**

*Inf.* In the sense of an *old person*, not doddering but almost. The term is jocular, and usually slightly pejorative, but without malice. "How did the accident happen?" "Well, this *old party* came along in a 1965 Austin, and . . ." *Party*, generally, means 'person' in colloquial conversation, derived in this usage from *party* in legal parlance, as in *party of the first part, guilty party*, etc.

**old school tie.** See under **old boy**.

**old soldier***Inf.* **old hand**

*Inf.* Implying that he's a crafty fellow. *Don't come the old soldier over me*, means 'Don't try to put one over on me.' A variant is *old stager*.

**old stager, *Inf.*** See under **old soldier.**

**old sweat, *Inf.***

**old soldier**

**O-levels.** See under **A-levels.**

**omnium gatherum**

**1. mixture**

**2. open house**

*Slang.* Mock Latin. *Omnium* is the genitive plural of *omnis*, Latin for 'all'; *gatherum* is a fake Latinization of 'gather.' Applied to:

1. Any motley collection of persons or things.
2. A party open to all comers.

**on, *prep.***

**over**

A poker term used in the description of a full house. Thus, aces *on* **knives**, which in America would be aces *over* jacks. See **Appendix I.A.1.**

**(be) on a hiding to nothing**

**face annihilation**

Or, less dramatically, *face insuperable odds, be without a prayer, i.e., with no hope of success.* *Hiding*, in this expression, is synonymous with *thrashing*, and *a hiding to nothing* means 'a thrashing to bits.'

**on a lobby basis**

**off the record**

Describing the condition on which politicians supply information to newspaper reporters. See **lobbyist.**

**on a piece of string**

***Inf.* in a tight spot**

*Inf.* A bad place to be on either continent. Usually in the phrase *to have someone on a piece of string*, describing someone being manipulated by someone else.

**on a plate**

**on a silver platter**

**on appro**

**on approval**

*Inf.* Describing merchandise taken but returnable at the customer's option. *Appro* is accented on the first syllable.

**once in a way**

**once in a while**

Rarely, that is.

**one-eyed village**

***Inf.* one-horse town**

*Inf.* Also known in America as a *whistle stop*.

**one hundred percent copper-bottomed**

**absolutely sound**

*Inf.* Especially applied to financial matters. The usage arises from the belief that a copper-bottomed pan or broiler is much more solid and longer lasting than one made of other metals; or it may have arisen from the image of a ship sheathed with copper. In another context, modifying the noun *excuse*, it is the equivalent of *airtight*.

**one in the eye**

***Slang.* a crusher**

*Inf.* *That's one in the eye for you* means 'That'll hold you for a while.'

**one-off**, *n., adj.*The *only one made*, or *run off*, referring to manufactured goods.**one of a kind****oner**, *n., Slang.***1. outstanding person or thing****2. K.O. blow****3. Inf. big fib**(Pronounced WUNNER, from *one* (as in *one of a kind*); possibly influenced by the careless pronunciation of *wonder*.)**on form**, *adj.***in great shape**

As everybody knows who has spent any time at all wagering hard-earned funds on the outcome of a horse race, we rely on a *form* in making our bets. This is the information that ranks the horses in a race based on how fast each horse is said to be, the health of the horses, the success rates of the jockeys, and the like. A horse that runs up to expectations is said to be *on form*. A horse below par is said to be *off form*. Because horse racing is so popular, the phraseology of the sport of kings, as it is called, often spreads beyond the racetrack. Thus, a person who does his job well, or who excels at squash or any of the rest of life, is also said to be *on form*, but in America such a person is much more often said to be *in great shape*.

**on heat****in heat**See **Appendix I.A.1.****o.n.o.****or near offer**Usually seen in real estate advertisements and used car ads: 'xyz amount *o.n.o.*'**on offer****on sale**

Indicating a special offer, thus: *Yardley's bath soap is on offer this week*. In America there would most likely be a sign on the counter or in the window reading SPECIAL or TODAY'S SPECIAL or SPECIAL THIS WEEK. Not to be confused with **under offer**, meaning 'for sale,' but only subject to rejection of a pending offer.

**on one's pat****on one's own**

*Slang.* From rhyming slang. *Pat Malone for alone*. Synonymous with **on one's tod**. See also **off one's own bat**.

**on one's tod****on one's own**

*Slang.* Rhyming slang from *Tod Sloan*, a famous jockey, for *alone*. Synonymous with **on one's pat**. See also **off one's own bat**.

**on second thoughts****on second thought**

How singular of the Americans! But they do have second thoughts.

**on strike****at bat**

A **cricket** term. Two batsmen are always "up" at the same time, one at either end of the **pitch**. The one to whom the bowler is bowling at a given moment is said to be *on strike*.

**on the cards****in the cards**See **Appendix I.A.1.**

**on the cheap****cheaply**

*Inf.* Something bought *on the cheap* is a bargain. The phrase can mean 'on a shoe-string' in certain contexts, thus: *We started the business on the cheap; We were getting along on the cheap.* See also **cheap**.

**on the day****when the time comes**

Thus: *On the day, the people will see the light and vote the other way.* A favorite usage of politicians. Also *on the night*: famous last words of theatrical performers when things aren't going well at rehearsal: *It'll be all right on the night*, i.e., when the curtain really goes up.

**(be) on the game****(be) a prostitute**

*Slang.* Synonymous with **(be) on the knock**.

**on the hob, Slang.***Slang.* **on the wagon**

**on the hop.** See **caught on the hop**.

**(be) on the knock****(be) a prostitute**

*Slang.* Not to be confused with *be on the knock-off*, which is underworld jargon for *living by thievery*. Synonymous with **(be) on the game**.

**on the loose****on a spree**

*Inf.* Rather than merely *fancy-free*, which the expression connotes in America.

**on the right lines****on the right track****on the slate***Inf.* **on the cuff**

*Inf.* Synonymous with **on tick**. Usually heard in pubs, in the expression *Put it on the slate*, said to the **landlord** by a **local** out of funds. In the old days, the reluctant landlord actually had a slate on which such transactions on credit were recorded.

**on the spot****alert**

*Inf.* *Right there* when he's needed. There is a flavor of this British usage in the old-fashioned expression familiar to Americans, *Johnny-on-the-spot*.

**on the stocks***Inf.* **in the works**

*Inf.* *Already started*, describing any project on which work has already begun. Borrowed from shipbuilding, where stocks hold back a ship while it is building and must be released when building is complete.

**on the strength****on the payroll**

*The strength* is the working force of an organization. The use of *strength* in this connection is related to the use of *strong* in an expression like *twenty strong*, to describe the size of a group. See **strong**.

**on the teapot, Inf.***Inf.* **on the wagon****on the telephone****having a telephone**

In America *on the telephone* means 'speaking on the telephone.' In Britain if you want to get in touch with someone and want to know whether or not he has a phone, you ask him, *Are you on the telephone?* In America you would ask, *Do you have a phone?*

**on the tiles.** See **night on the tiles.**

**on the up and up** *Slang.* **going places**  
*Slang.* Quite a different meaning in Britain! Describes a person or company moving ahead satisfactorily.

**on thorns, Inf.** *Inf.* **on tenterhooks**

**on tick** **on the cuff**  
*Inf.* See also **on the slate.**

**on train.** See **in train.**

**On your bike! Slang.** *Slang.* **Get lost!**

**oof** *Slang.* **dough**  
 In the sense of 'money.' This word is at the least old-fashioned; it may now be obsolete. It is short for *oofisch*, a Yiddish corruption of *auf dem Tisch*, which is German for 'on the table.' In other words, *money on the table*, also known as *cash on the barrelhead*. The current slang term is **lolly**.

**open-cast mining** **strip mining**

**open goods-waggon** **gondola car**  
 See **truck**.

**opening time.** See **during hours.**

**open the bowling, Inf.** **set the ball rolling; get things started**  
 A term borrowed from **cricket**. One starts the game by bowling (over-arm) the first ball, which 'opens the bowling,' and thus gets things under way. See **bowler**, 2. To *change the bowling* (literally, to put in a new bowler) is to *make a change* generally, as when a firm has to replace an executive or any employee, a technique, its image, the advertising, etc.

**Open University** *SEE COMMENT*  
 Correspondence courses in Britain involving written materials and reading lists, supplemented by live tutorial sessions and television and radio lectures, and in some courses some attendance at a regular university. These courses are open to anyone without regard to scholastic qualifications. There are examinations and an A.B. degree can be earned in a minimum of three years.

**operating-theatre, n.** **operating room**

**oppidan, n.** *SEE COMMENT*  
 An Etonian living off campus. At Eton there are seventy *collegers*, also known there as **scholars** or *foundation scholars*, and 1,030 (or thereabouts) *oppidans* (from *oppidum*, Latin for 'town'). The *collegers*, or *scholars*, are the privileged few who live in *college*. The *oppidans* attend the same courses but live in school boarding-houses in town.

**opposite prompt**

Short for *opposite prompter* and often abbreviated to *o.p.* This archaic circumlocution was based on the position of the prompter's box in the old days. *Prompt* (short for *prompt side*, often abbreviated to *p.s.*) naturally means 'stage left.' These terms sometimes mean the exact reverse, particularly in old theaters, where the prompter's box was located on the other side of the stage.

**stage right****(the) opposition, n.**

The *opposition* is the *competing firm* in one's profession or business.

**(the) competition****ops room**

*Inf.* A military expression. A *tour of ops* is an R.A.F. term meaning the number of missions to be completed in order to earn a rest period.

**operations planning room****optic**

SEE COMMENT

Measuring device fastened to the neck of liquor bottles in pubs. The device is called an *optic* because the liquor flows out of the upside-down bottle into a transparent vessel and is thus visible to the naked eye. In this fashion, not a micron over one-sixth of a gill escapes into the waiting glass, whereas American bartenders tend to be more liberal, on the whole, in dispensing their shots. See **double, 3; Appendix II.C.2.b.**

**orbital, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A new name, from 'orbital road,' for what used to be called a *circular road* or **ring-road**, to describe a bypass encircling a town. The adjective is used as a noun.

**orderly bin****street litterbox****order paper**

An *order paper* is the Parliamentary equivalent of an American Congressional *calendar*.

**legislative calendar****order to view**

Term used in house hunting. A written order issued by the real estate agent.

**appointment to look at****ordinary, adj.**

*Regular mail*, to a Briton, sounds like *mail at regular intervals* rather than *normal mail* (i.e., not special delivery or registered, etc.).

**regular****ordinary call**

Telephone call. In Britain a *person-to-person* call is known as a *personal* call.

**station-to-station call****ordinary shares****common stock****ordnance datum**

*Above sea level* is commonly seen in Britain; *above ordnance datum* is never seen in America.

**sea level****organize, v.t.**

*Inf.* As in, *It's too late to organize a baby sitter*, when you get a last-minute invitation to play dinner or to bridge. To *organize* somebody or something is to 'get hold of,' to 'arrange for,' the person or thing that fills the need.

**Inf. round up**

**(the) other half**

*Inf.* When your kind friend notices that you've finished your drink—the first one, anyway—he asks solicitously, "How about the other half?" And when you've done with that one, the kind friend is known to repeat the delightful question, in the same words.

**another drink**

**other place.** See **another place.**

**other ranks**

*Non-officers.* Frequently referred to as ORs.

**enlisted men****outdoor relief**

SEE COMMENT

Aid given by a poorhouse to an outsider. Also known in Britain as *out-relief*; now obsolete.

**outgoings, n. pl.****expenses**

This British word is used to cover not only *household expenses* but also *business overhead*. Note that *overhead* is *overheads* in Britain, a real plural taking a plural verb. In America usually called *outlay*.

**outhouse, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Any building incidental to and built near or against the main house; not an outdoor privy, as in America.

**out of bounds****off limits**

Applies principally to military personnel.

**out of the hunt.** See **in the hunt.**

**outwith, prep.****outside**

A Scottish usage, as in, *This pay-rise (raise in pay) cannot be allowed as it is outwith the pay code (wage ceiling).*

**oven glove****pot-holder****over, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Cricket term; explained under **maiden over.**

**overall, n.****1. coverall****2. smock**

The British use *overall*, or **boiler suit**, in the sense of a 'one-piece work garment' and also to describe what Americans would call a *smock*.

**overbalance, v.i.****lose one's balance**

The British sometimes use the verb transitively as well, meaning to 'make (someone) lose his balance.' The usual American meaning is 'outweigh.'

**overdraft, n.****bank loan**

The universal British term for a bank loan, with none of the implications of faulty checkbook maintenance. This type of overdraft is arranged in advance (a banking practice now spreading in America). The inadvertent type, or an intentional overdraft not previously arranged for, results in a letter from the bank.

**overleaf, adv.**Of a page or printed notice. See also **P.T.O.****on the reverse side****overspill, n., adj.**

An *overspill* city is a new British sociopolitical phenomenon. It is a made-to-order city designed in accordance with blueprints drawn up under the New Towns Act to take care of surplus urban population. Thus, there exist the New Towns of Crawley, Stevenage and Basildon.

**surplus population****overtake, v.t., v.i.**

A traffic term. DO NOT OVERTAKE is the British road sign equivalent of NO PASSING.

**pass****over the eight.** See **have one over the eight.****over the moon****in raptures****over the odds**To *ask* or *pay over the odds* for something is to demand or pay a price in excess of the generally accepted price for the commodity in question.**above market value****over the road****across the street****over the top**

*Inf. Excessive*, as in *Calling him a thief was over the top*. To *go over the top* is to *overact*, especially in the theater, in which context it would mean to 'ham it up.'

**going too far****owner-occupier.** See under **occupier.****Oxbridge, n. adj.**

SEE COMMENT

Oxford and Cambridge; a **portmanteau** concoction. Used when contrasting Oxford and Cambridge with the provincial universities such as Birmingham, Manchester, and Sheffield, which are referred to as the **redbrick universities**, originally a pejorative term. The image of these universities, however, has been greatly enhanced. No comparable term is yet current to describe a third group of new universities which has recently been established. Of several terms heard, the most pleasant is the *Shakespearean universities*, so-called because their names (Essex, Sussex, Warwick, Kent, Lancaster, York) suggest the *dramatis personae* of his historical plays. *Oxbridge* might be defined—more or less—as *Ivy League*, and is used as an adjective in such expressions as *Oxbridge type*, *Oxbridge accent*, etc., with the same connotations as *Ivy League*. See also **redbrick university**.

**Oxford bags.** See **bags.****Oxonian, n. adj.**

SEE COMMENT

Of Oxford. From the Latinized name of the city, *Oxonia*. In a narrower sense, an *Oxonian* is a student or graduate of Oxford University. Abbreviation: *Oxon*.

**oxter, n.**

Mostly North of England and Scottish, but used occasionally in other parts by obscurantists.

**armpit**

# P

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## **p., n.**

SEE COMMENT

Abbreviation of *penny* or *pence*, and pronounced as P. See **Appendix II.A.**

## **P.A.**

**secretary**

Abbreviation of *personal assistant*, a lofty title in vogue in the British Foreign and Civil Services for secretaries. Now used in advertisements for positions in ordinary businesses as well.

## **pack, n.**

**deck**

In the expression *pack of cards*. *Deck* is also used in Britain.

## **package deal**

**turnkey deal**

*Package deal* is used interchangeably with *turnkey deal* in Britain in the oil industry to indicate a fixed price for the drilling of an exploratory well to an agreed depth. It is not so used in America, where *turnkey* is the correct term.

## **packed out with**

*Inf.* **packed full of**

*Inf.* For instance, a popular restaurant in London may be *packed out with* people at lunch time. See also **chock-a-block**.

## **packet, n.**

**package**

The delivery man in Britain leaves a *packet* at the door; in America this would be a *package*. Applied to cigarettes, the American term is *pack*. *Pay packet* is the British equivalent of *pay envelope*. *Packet* has a number of slang uses as well. To *pay a packet* is to *pay a fortune* (or *an arm and a leg*); synonymous with **pay the earth**; and things that cost a lot are said to *cost a packet*. If you win a lot of money at a British track or on the London Stock Exchange, you *make a packet*. The American equivalent of this would be a *pile*. See also **twenty**.

## **pack it in**

**desist; finish**

*Slang*. Synonymous with **pack up** as that term applies to persons. *I used to garden, but because of my bad back, I packed it in*. Sometimes, *pack it up*. Also means to 'leave,' 'depart,' or 'quit' (e.g., for the day).

**pack it up**. See **pack it in**.

## **pack up**

*Slang*. **quit; conk out**

*Slang*. Applies to both persons and things. Of persons, it means to 'retire,' 'throw in one's hand.' Also, to 'leave,' 'depart'; see under **pack it in**. Of machines, for example, to *conk out*, or *break down*.

## **paddle, v.i.**

**wade**

To go wading in shallow water. The British use *wade* in the sense of walking through water, mud, snow, or any obstructive material, rather than engaging in a pleasant aquatic pastime.

**paddy, n.***Inf.* *Paddywhack* is a variant.**tantrum****page, n.**Sometimes *hotel page* or *page-boy*. Occasionally called *buttons*.**bellhop****pair, n.***Pair* is used on building directories to indicate what *floor* a tenant occupies. A person on the *third pair* means a person 'three flights up.' Old-fashioned building directories usually put the number of the pair first, followed by the name of the occupants.**floor****pair of tongs.** See under **barge-pole**.**Paki, n. adj.***Slang.* (Rhymes with WACKY.) An abbreviated form with unpleasant racist connotations. *Paki-bashing* is an unpleasant word for the unpleasant activities of roaming gangs looking for Pakistanis to beat up.**Pakistani****palaver***Slang.* A *palaver*, literally, in both countries, is a *powwow*, a prolonged parley, usually between parties of different levels of culture. In both Britain and America, it has acquired the significance of *idle talk* or *chatter*, but in Britain alone it is common slang for *affair* or *business* in the sense of 'big deal' or 'fuss'; anything complicated by red tape or confusion. The word almost always appears in the expression *such a palaver*. *I'd love to go to the opera but getting tickets is such a palaver!***affair; business****palette-knife, n.**

It can also mean what it does in America: a metal blade with a handle, used for mixing and sometimes applying artists' colors.

**spatula****palliasse, n.****straw mattress****panache, n.***Panache* has the literal meaning of 'plume,' as on a helmet. It is found in Britain in phrases such as *professional panache*, describing, for instance, a doctor or lawyer who acts very sure of himself; in America, too, for *flamboyance*.**flair; swagger****pancake roll**

Delicious Chinese restaurant fare.

**egg roll****panda car**A familiar sight on residential beats is the small police car, usually light blue with white doors and a large POLICE sign on top. They are all blue in London. See also **jam sandwich; Z-car**.**police car****panel, n.**List of **National Health Service** doctors for a given district. A *panel doctor* is one on such a list; a *panel practice* is one consisting of National Health patients.

SEE COMMENT

**pannage, n.****pig food**

**panttechnicon, n.****moving van**

Also *panttechnicon van*. *Panttechnicon van* is the equivalent of *moving van*, but *van* is dropped so that *panttechnicon* has come to designate the van. This strange word was the name of a London building known as *The Panttechnicon* (an obsolete word for 'bazaar' or 'exhibition of arts and crafts') which, over a century ago housed a collection of the wonders of the Victorian age. It failed as a commercial venture and the building was turned into a furniture warehouse while keeping the name, which was inevitably transferred to the vehicles used. See also **removals**.

**pantomime, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Sometimes *panto* for short. This is a British form of show, produced during the Christmas season, based on fairy tales or legends, involving singing, dancing, clowning, topical humor, and almost anything but the silence which is associated with the word in its ordinary sense. Adults are admitted if accompanied by children.

**pants, n. pl.****underpants**

The British equivalent of American *pants* is *trousers*. In Britain *pants* are *underwear*, usually men's shorts; but *pants* in Britain can also include ladies' *panties*. See also **shorts; frillies; knickers; liners; smalls**.

**Paper, n.***approx.* **government publication**

There are White, Blue, and Green *Papers*. White and Blue *Papers* are official documents laid before Parliament by command of one of the Secretaries of State and are known as *command papers*. The short ones are bound in a white cover, the long ones in a blue cover. *White* and *Blue* are simply a matter of binding. *Green Papers*, issued in green bindings, a later development, cover government plans to be placed before the public as a basis for discussion in advance of decision.

*Black Paper* is a relatively new term, meaning a 'pamphlet' (unofficial, non-governmental) issued by an *ad hoc* group on any given subject, expressing a view contrary to that of the government or analyzing what they consider to be a scandal.

**paper knife****letter opener****paraffin, n.****kerosene**

The British equivalent of American *paraffin* is **white wax** or *paraffin wax*.

**parish, n.***approx.* **town**

The parish was formerly the subdivision of a county constituting the smallest unit of local government, and was regulated by what was known as a *parish council*. Originally, the term had the familiar religious connotation; but when used alone, it was, in proper context, understood to mean 'civil parish.' The American approximation of *parish* in that sense would have been *town*, in rural areas. *Parish* is now obsolete as a unit of government.

**park.** See under **car park; caravan**.

**parking bay****parking space**

The space covered by a parking meter, or an outdoor parking space for rent.

**parky, adj.****chilly; brisk**

*Slang.* Meteorological slang: '*A parky day, isn't it?*'

**parson's nose**

*Inf.* That part of a fowl that goes over the fence last.

*Inf.* **pope's nose****part brass rags**

*Slang.* Originally a naval expression, based on buddies' sharing their brass-cleaning rags. When the friendship ceased, they *parted brass rags*. Now applied to any severance of a pair, persons who have worked together.

*Inf.* **break things off**

**part exchange.** See **give in part exchange**.

**parting, n.**

Both British and Americans *part* their hair, but the result is known as a *parting* in Britain and a *part* in America. Cf. **turning** for *turn*. See **Appendix I.A.3**.

**part****party candidate**

SEE COMMENT

When Americans go to the polls they vote for all sorts of offices, from president down, and they either vote the *straight ticket* or *split their ticket*. A Briton votes only for his *M.P. (Member of Parliament)*, and if his vote is based on party rather than choice of individual, he votes for his *party candidate*.

**party manifesto**

Also, **programme**.

**political platform****pass, n.**

Referring to school examinations: thus, *O-level pass*, *A-level pass*, etc. See **A-levels**. A *pass degree* is a lesser level of academic distinction than an *honours degree*. See also **class; first**.

**passing grade****pass, v.t.****1. leave (a message)****2. refer**

1. As in, *He isn't in now. Would you care to pass a message?*
2. As in, *I'll pass you to the person who handles your account.*

**passage, n.****corridor****passbook, n.**

SEE COMMENT

In addition to its meaning shared with America ('savings bankbook'), this word has two further meanings in Britain: 1. A book supplied by a bank for the recording of deposits and withdrawals in a checking account (**current account**) as well as in a savings account (**deposit account**). 2. The document formerly issued to non-white persons by the South African government, which they had to carry at all times; a type of identity card.

**passing, n.**

Referring to a bill in Parliament.

**passage****passman**

SEE COMMENT

A person who takes a degree at a university without distinction.

**pass out**

Usage confined to the military, meaning to 'complete military training.' The act itself is not called *passing out*, but rather *passage out*. In this sense, nothing to do

**graduate**

with the curse of drink, though *pass out* is used (and happens) in Britain that way as well.

### **past a joke**

*Inf.* **not funny**

*Slang. Intolerable.* Describes a situation that can no longer be laughed off or tolerated.

### **past praying for**

**in desperate straits**

*Inf. Beyond hope; up the creek without a paddle.*

### **pasty, n.**

SEE COMMENT

The only one-word American approximation is *knish*. The most famous *pasty* of all is the *Cornish pasty*, which originated in the Duchy of Cornwall but is now ubiquitous in Britain and is usually filled with seasoned meat mixed with vegetables. *Knishes* are usually filled with mashed potatoes, which would seem to make for a very unbalanced diet indeed. *Pasties* can be filled with almost anything—there are *jam pasties* and *fruit pasties* as well as *meat pasties*. See also **pie**; **tart**.

### **patch, n.**

*Inf.* **police beat**

*Inf.* A special usage, as where a policeman says of a particularly unpleasant homicide case, *I'm glad it isn't on my patch*. Synonymous with **manor** used in this sense. For other idiomatic uses of *patch*, see **bad patch** and **not a patch on**.

### **pater, n.**

**father**

*Slang.* Old usage; **public school** style.

### **Paternoster Row**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Formerly, the *publishing industry*. Paternoster Row in London was for centuries the street where booksellers and publishers had their home. Destroyed in World War II. The phrase is rarely used today.

### **patience, n.**

**solitaire**

Name for the endless varieties of card game played by a lone player. *Patience* is the British name and *solitaire* the usual American name, although *patience* is occasionally heard among older people in America. The game *solitaire* in Britain describes a game played by a lone player with marbles on a board containing little holes into which the marbles fit.

### **patrial, n.**

SEE COMMENT

One having the right of abode and exemption from control in the U.K. under the Immigration Act 1971. The important innovation was to confer such rights on Commonwealth citizens who have a parent born in the U.K. Descendants of patrials have the right of free admission to the U.K.

### **Patrol, n.**

*approx.* **School Zone**

Signs reading **PATROL 150 YARDS**, **PATROL 125 yards**, etc., often with a picture of a child, are the equivalent of **SCHOOL ZONE** signs in America. The implication is that a **lollipop man** or **woman** may be on duty.

### **pavement, n.**

**sidewalk**

*Sidewalk* is not used by the British. *Crazy pavement* (more often *crazy paving*) denotes irregularly shaped, sometimes varicolored flat stones used in the build-

ing of garden paths, patios, etc. *Pavement artists* make very elaborate colored chalk drawings in London and other cities on sidewalks and hope for tips from passersby.

**pawky**, *adj.*

**sly**

**pay bed**

**paid hospital bed**

As opposed to a free bed under the **National Health Service**.

**pay-box**, *n.*

**box office**

**pay code**

**wage ceiling**

**P.A.Y.E.**

**pay as you go**

These dreary initials stand for *pay as you earn*, which is the British name for the income-tax system which provides for the withholding of income tax by employers.

**pay for the call**

**accept the charge**

This is the term used by the operator in the process of putting through a collect call (**reverse-charge call**, in Britain). The American operator asks the person at the other end of the line, *Will you accept the charge?* The British operator asks, *Will you pay for the call?*

**paying-in slip**

**deposit slip**

Banking term.

**pay one's shot**

**chip in**

*Inf.* Synonymous with *pay one's whack*. See **whack**, 3.

**pay one's whack**. See **whack**, 3.

**pay on the nail**, *Slang.*

*Slang.* **pay spot cash**

**pay packet**. See **packet**.

**pay policy**

**wage control**

In Britain, an arrangement between the government and the trade unions, as opposed to formal legislative control. Also referred to as *wage restraint*. See also **social contract**; **wage restraint**.

**pay (someone) in washers**

*Slang.* **pay (someone) peanuts**

*Slang.* A contemptuous idiom used by people connected with engineering, *washers* being of negligible value.

**pay the earth**

*Inf.* **pay a fortune**

*Inf.* Americans also *pay an arm and a leg*, a particularly gruesome expression not used by the British. The British also say *cost a fortune*, as well as *cost the earth*.

P.C.

1. **Privy Councillor**

2. **Police Constable**

3. **postcard**

1. See under **Birthday Honours**.

2. If your daughter's going out with a *P.C.*, you may hope for 1. but must be prepared for 2. See **constable**. *P.C.* is the official title, as in *P.C. Smith*.  
 3. Usually in lower case, **p.c.**

**peak viewing time****prime time****pearly, n.****fruit and vegetable pushcart vendor**

*Inf.* Called a *pearly* when dressed in *pearlies*, a holiday costume richly adorned with mother-of-pearl buttons. When so attired, *pearlies* and their wives are sometimes called *Pearly Kings* and *Pearly Queens*. The prosaic name for these flamboyant street vendors is **costermonger**, and their costumes date back more than a century.

**pea-stick n.****bean pole****pebble-dash, n.****pebble-coated stucco**

A frequent building surfacing in Britain. It gets dirty rather quickly and appears to be totally unwashable because of the rough texture.

**peckish, adj.***approx. Inf.* **empty**

*Inf.* *Peckish* means 'hungry,' 'wanting a snack,' hankering after a little something to fill the void. Undoubtedly, *peckish* is derived from *peck* as in *pecking* at food, a little of this and a little of that, the way a chicken eats.

**pedestal, n.****toilet bowl**

Sometimes *w.c. pedestal*, a euphemism for *toilet bowl*, seen, for example, in lavatory signs on certain British railroad cars requesting passengers not to throw various objects into the *w.c. pedestal*.

**pedlar, n.***Slang.* **blabbermouth**

*Inf.* *Pedlar* is usually spelled *peddler* in America. Its literal meaning is the same in both countries, evoking the image of a *pack-carrying* or *wagon-driving hawker* of small and extremely miscellaneous merchandise. In Britain it has a figurative meaning: 'gossip' as indeed most *pedlars* must have been, since they saw everything that was going on.

**pee, n., v.i.****1. urination****2. urinate**

*Inf.* Surprisingly, to Americans at least, this word is fast becoming acceptable in familiar speech, even in mixed company, while Americans go to great lengths to dream up euphemisms.

**peeler. See bobby.****peep-behind-the-curtain. See Tom Tiddler's ground.****peep-toes, n. pl., Slang.****open-toed shoes****peer, n.**

## SEE COMMENT

A member of the titled nobility. A peer's wife or a female peer in her own right is a *peeress*. See also **Lord; Lady; Dame; K.**

**peg away***Inf.* **plug along**

*Inf.* To *stay with* a job, no matter how tired you get. See also **soldier on**.

**peg out**, *Slang*.

See also **drop off the hooks**; **turn up one's toes**.

*Slang*. **kick the bucket**

**pelican crossing**

Pe(destrian) li(ght) con(trolled) crossing: it ought to be spelled *pelicon*, but close enough. See also **zebra**.

**pedestrian crossing**

**pelmet**, *n*.

**valance**

**penny**, *n*. See **Appendix II.A**.

**penny dreadful**

*Inf*. **dime novel**

*Inf*. Sometimes called a *penny blood* or a *shilling shocker*. All these terms may have an old-fashioned ring, but are still in use, often jocularly.

**(the) penny dropped**

*Slang*. **I (he, etc.) got the message**

*Slang*. *Something clicked*. Used to describe the situation where the protagonist is at first unaware of the significance of what is going on, can't take a hint or two, and then—finally—the veil lifts: *it dawns on him; he gets the point; it clicks*. Metaphor from a vending-machine (which the British call **slot-machine**). See also **penny in the slot**.

**penny-farthing**, *n*.

**high-wheeler**

*Inf*. Primitive bicycle.

**penny gaff**. See **gaff**.

**penny in the slot**

*approx. Inf*. **took the bait**

*Inf*. Said when one succeeds in evoking a predictable reaction from someone, by baiting him.

**penny reading**

SEE COMMENT

An old-time show consisting of a series of short skits and sketches, usually comic. The price of admission was a penny. The practice is kept alive at some of the **public schools**.

**pennyworth**, *n*.

SEE COMMENT

Sometimes *penn'orth*. A *pennyworth* is, literally, as much as can be bought for a penny. The expression *not a pennyworth* means 'not the least bit.' *Pennyworth*, in the expression *a good or bad pennyworth*, means a 'bargain.'

**pension cover**

**pension benefits**

**pensioner**, *n*.

**senior citizen**

See **O.A.P.** Also, in Cambridge, an undergraduate without financial assistance from the university.

**pepper-caster (-caster)**, *n*.

**pepper shaker**

**pepper-pot**, *n*.

**pepper shaker**

**perambulator**, *n*.

**baby carriage**

But practically always shortened to *pram*.

**pergola, n.**

*Pergola*, in America, evokes the image of a rustic garden house to escape into out of the rain or for children to play house in or adolescents to daydream in. Technically it means an 'arbor' or 'bower.' But in Britain, especially in the country, it is the name for a *trellis* running in a straight line and usually constructed of slim tree trunks as uprights and branches as crosspieces and Y-shaped supports, all still wearing their bark, and forming a frame for the training of climbing roses.

**trellis**

**period return.** See **return.**

**perish, v.t.**

*Perish* is, of course, in both countries an intransitive verb. The transitive use is very rare in America and is now heard only in dialect. In Britain one still is *perished* by (or with) cold, thirst, etc. This does not mean one has died of it but merely been distressed or at least made seriously uncomfortable. When heat or cold *perishes* vegetation, it does mean 'destroy.' *Perishing* can be used in Britain as an adverb, as in *perishing cold*. It's *perishing cold*, which means 'terribly cold,' is another British way of saying **bloody cold**.

**destroy****perks, n. pl.**

*Inf.* Shortening of *perquisites*. Gaining currency in America.

**fringe benefits****permanent way**

Railroad term. It means the 'roadbed' or the 'rails' themselves. The epithet *permanent* derives from the earliest days of railroad construction, when the gangs laid temporary trackage, and then later put in the *permanent* tracks, after the right of way had consolidated.

**roadbed****perry, n.**

A fermented pear juice drink in Britain. See also **cider**; **scrump**.

**pear cider****personal allowance**

Income tax term.

**personal exemption****personal call**

See also **pay for the call**; **caller**.

**person-to-person call****Perspex, perspex, n.****plexiglass****peterman, n. Slang**

Also in America called a 'peteman.'

**safe cracker****petrol, n.**

A *petrol station* is a *filling station*.

**gasoline****petrol bomb**

*Inf.* **Molotov cocktail**

**petty, n.**

*Slang.* A lavatory. Heard mostly in the North of England.

**Slang. john****pewter, n.**

*Slang.* Used in this context *pewter* means only 'prize' (money or any object), the

**Slang. booty**

kind of *loot* you bring home from a church bazaar. This use was derived from the fact that the prize was often a tankard, usually of pewter.

## P.G.

## boarder

*Inf.* Stands for *paying guest*, a euphemism for what Americans would call a *boarder* and Britons call a **lodger**. *Paying guest* would seem to be close to a contradiction in terms. Can be used as a verb: to *p.g.* (or *PG*) with someone is to *board* with him.

## picotee, n.

SEE COMMENT

A variety of carnation having a border of a color different from the main color of its petals. The border is usually darker.

## pictures, n. pl., *Inf.*

## movies

See also **film**; **cinema**.

## pie, n.

## meat-pie; deep-dish pie

An ordinary American pie would be called a *tart* in Britain (see **tart**). In Britain, unless otherwise specified, *pie* means 'meat pie' (see **pasty**), rather than anything involving fruit, and a request for a fruit-pie (*apple pie*, *cherry pie*, etc.) would produce the equivalent of an American *deep-dish pie*.

## pie and pint man

SEE COMMENT

*Slang.* A person of extremely modest means. The *pie* in question is a *meat pie* (see **pie**); the *pint* is a *pint of bitter* (see **bitter**; **pint**). A meat pie and a pint of bitter (*beer*) would make the meal, presumably at a **pub**, of one living on a low budget. By contrast, a *pieman* is a vendor of *pies*.

## pie shell

## pie crust

Especially the prepared type for sale at the grocer's.

## pig-in-the-middle, n. *Inf.*

SEE COMMENT

The *innocent victim* of a situation; one caught in a difficult situation not of his own making, like a dispute between good friends both of whom appeal to him for support. From the children's game *piggie-in-the-middle*, in which a child is caught in a circle of his peers and must struggle to get out.

## pig it

## 1. live like a pig

## 2. eat like a pig

*Slang.* Becoming current in America. To *pig it* with someone is to share his quarters, with the connotation of having to squeeze in and live untidily for the time being.

**pigs might fly, and.** See **and pigs might fly**.

**pi-jaw.** See **jaw**.

## pikelet, n.

SEE COMMENT

A small, round, crumpet-like cake, originating in Wales. In many families, served mainly at Christmas.

## pile on the agony

## *Inf.* lay it on thick

*Inf.* To intensify the painful narrative, sparing no detail; but it may also be used to indicate any excessive or exaggerated action or display, such as, e.g., a painfully lavish entertainment or feast. See also **come it strong**.

**pillar-box**

In the form of a high, hollow, red pillar. See also **letter-box**; **post-box**.

**mailbox****pinch, v.t.***Inf. swipe*

*Slang.* *Pinch* and *swipe* meaning 'steal,' and *pinch* meaning 'arrest' are used in both countries; but in the meaning 'steal,' *pinch* is favored in Britain and *swipe* in America, where *pinch* more commonly means 'arrest.' In America you're *pinched* if you are caught *swiping*; in Britain, you're *nabbed* if you are caught *pinching*.

**pinch-point, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Restriction on vehicles beyond a certain width. See **except for access**.

**pink, v.i.***Inf. ping; knock*

*Inf.* Describing the sound made by an automobile engine when the ignition is over-advanced.

**pink gin**

SEE COMMENT

Gin and angostura bitters, with water added.

**pinny, n.****apron**

*Inf.* Child's abbreviation of *pinafore*.

**pint, n.***approx. beer*

If a Briton asks for a *pint* he means a 'pint of **bitter**' an Imperial pint of twenty ounces. If his thirst or budget is of more modest proportions, he will ask for a **half**, or *half a bitter*, which means 'half a pint,' i.e., ten oz. Since *bitter* is usually of two grades, *ordinary bitter* and *best bitter*, the regular client, whose taste in the matter is a known quantity, need not specify. Otherwise he will volunteer the grade, or the person behind the counter will ask. Standing by itself, in this context, a *pint* in Britain means about the same thing as a *beer* means in America. At one of the meetings of the E.E.C. in 1976, the British were formally allowed to hang on to *pints* in beer, so long as they went metric in everything else. See also **pub**; **during hours**.

**pinta, n.****pint of milk**

*Inf.* (The *i* is long as in *ice*.) Originated in the National Dairy Council's advertisement *Drink a pinta milka day!* Never to be confused with **pint**. Probably a corruption of *pint of*.

**pip, n.***Slang. beep*

*Slang.* When you make a call from a telephone booth, as your party answers, you hear a series of rapid *pips* and must promptly insert your coin in order to be heard. Short *pips*, called *beeps*, are the sounds you are supposed to hear, in America, every 15 seconds, if your call is being recorded.

**pip, v.t.**

1. *Slang. blackball*
2. *Slang. wing (wound)*
3. *Slang. pull rank on*
4. *Slang. nose out*

*Slang.* For use 4. see **pip at the post**.

**pip at the post, v.t.***Inf.* **nose out***Inf.* The post referred to is the winning post in a horse race. *Pip at the post* means 'defeat at the last moment.'**pissed, adj.***Inf.* **blind drunk***Slang.* Usually reserved for instances of advanced inebriation. A vulgarism like **pee**, which is heard widely. See also **sloshed; squiffy; to the wide; well away.****pit n.****rear of orchestra**What is called the *orchestra* in America turns up in Britain as the **stalls**. The *pit* used to be the name for the rear of that part of the theater.**pitch, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A technical term in **cricket**: the narrow rectangular strip between the **wickets** along (or parallel to) which the **batsmen** run; often confusingly to neophytes, itself called the *wicket*. In **football (soccer)**, however, the whole field is called the *pitch*. *Pitch* is sometimes used colloquially, like *wicket*, to mean *situation*: to be *on a good pitch* (or *wicket*) is to be *in a good spot*. It is also slang for *hangout* or *spot*, to describe the established location of a beggar, peddler, prostitute, pimp, tout, or other street person whose living strongly involves the territorial imperative, and in this use is synonymous with **turf**.**pitch upon****select by chance***Inf.* The police pitched upon him as the likeliest suspect.**placeman, n.****public office holder**

With the strong implication that the appointment was motivated by self-interest.

**placet, n.****aye**An affirmative vote in an ecclesiastical or university body. *Placet* is the impersonal third person singular of the Latin verb *placere* (to *please, be acceptable*). Cf. **content**.**plain, adj.****homely**See under **homely**.**plain as a pikestaff, Inf.***Inf.* **plain as the nose on your face**

A pikestaff is a wooden stick with a pointed tip.

**planning permission****building permit**Short for *town and country planning permission*. A *town and country planning committee* is the British opposite number to an American *zoning board*.**plantation, n.****planted grove**

Of trees or shrubs.

**plaster, n.****Band-aid****platelayer, n.****tracklayer**

A man hired to inspect and repair railway rails.

**play a straight bat****play fair***Inf.* Act correctly; do the right thing. A term from **cricket** that is applied widely.

**play for safety****play safe****play for (someone's) side, *Inf.*** **be on (someone's) side; side with (someone)****play oneself in****settle down**

*Inf.* The cricket batsman initially feels out the bowler in order to 'get his eye in,' and thus settle down before he feels that it is now safe to start to attempt runs. This initial period of settling down is known as *playing oneself in*—one of the many cricket terms lent to the general language. Thus, a detective interviewing a nervous witness gives him time to *play himself in* before serious, pointed questioning begins. He talks about the weather, the curse of heavy traffic on the roads, the current political crisis, and then—wham!—goes into the active phase: "You knew the deceased for many years, didn't you, Mr. Wiggins?" and "Where were you on the night of . . . ?" and so on and so on. If he's successful, the detective has given the witness an opportunity to *play himself in*.

**play-pit, *n.*****sandbox****play the game.** See **game, *n.*****playtime, *n.*****recess**

School term, applicable to kindergarten and first grade, children four to six years old. In **prep school** (ages eight to thirteen) the term is *breaktime*.

**play (something) to leg****brush (something) off**

*Inf.* A term borrowed from **cricket**. When the **batsman** **plays** a ball **to leg**, he turns or sweeps it away with his bat, rather than attempt to hit it hard and try to make runs. Thus, to **play** a ball **to leg** is a defensive tactic; and to **play** an embarrassing question **to leg** is to brush it off somehow and evade the issue.

**play truant****play hooky**

The American term is almost unknown in Britain.

**play up!, *interj.******Inf.* come on!**

*Inf.* Yelled by sports fans to urge on their team, as in, *Play up, United!*

**play (someone) up****1. play up on (someone)****2. pester**

1. In Britain your trick knee or your hi-fi *plays you up*; in America it *plays up on you*.

2. Pupils who deliberately annoy their teachers are said to *play them up*.

**PLC/Plc/plc**

SEE COMMENT

Stands for *public limited company*, one whose shares (under the Companies Act of 1980) can be traded on the Stock Exchange. The three letters follow the name of such a **company**, as opposed to *Ltd.* following the name of a private limited company. In America, *Inc.* is used whether or not the corporation's stock can be traded on an exchange.

**Pleasure!****Don't mention it!**

A somewhat warmer response than the usual *Not at all*, *Pleasure* is a contraction of *It's a pleasure* or *My pleasure*. *Don't mention it* is heard, and sometimes *Think nothing of it*. *You're welcome*, which until recently was never heard and immediately

marked the user American, is now uttered more and more frequently by Britons. See also **Not at all**.

**plimsolls, n.**

**sneakers**

Another British term is **gym shoes**. *Plimsolls* is the common British word for *sneakers*, so named after Samuel Plimsoll, who also lent his name to the expression *Plimsoll's Mark* (or *Plimsoll Line*), which is the line showing how far a ship is allowed by law to be submerged when loaded. In addition, he is known as one of the moving forces behind the British Merchant Shipping Act of 1876.

**plonk, n.**

**cheap wine**

*Slang*. *Plink-plonk* was a variation on *blink-blunk*, a jocular play on *vin blanc* by the British Tommy in World War I. When the *plink* was dropped, the *plonk* that stayed on should still have been reminiscent of *blanc*, but somehow came to apply to any cheap wine.

**Plough, n.**

**Big Dipper**

Other British names for the *Big Dipper* are *Charles's Wain* and *Great Bear*. But see **big dipper**.

**plough, v.t.**

*Slang*. **flunk**

*Slang*. That is, to *flunk* a pupil, not an exam. Undoubtedly short for *plough under*. Sometimes used intransitively, in which case it does mean 'flunk an exam,' but *exam* is understood.

**ploughman's lunch**

*approx.* **bread and cheese**

*Inf.* A large piece of French bread, an enormous slab of Cheddar cheese, a vast chunk of butter, and a couple of sour pickled onions. A favorite at **pubs**.

**plough the sand(s), Inf.**

**work in vain**

**ploy, n.**

**1. job**

**2. toy**

*Inf.* The meaning *toy* refers to *educational toys*, and looks like a **portmanteau** formation of *play* and *toy*. In other words, a *toy* that keeps the kids busy with a *job*, like fitting things together. *Ploy* is now anything calculated to get results by outwitting or upsetting the other fellow.

**plum duff**

**plum pudding**

(The *duff* is *dough* pronounced like ROUGH.)

**plump, v.i.**

**vote wholeheartedly**

**po, n.**

*Inf.* **pottie**

*Slang*. Short for the *pot* in *chamber pot*, and pronounced like the POT in the French *pot de chambre*. The French pronunciation is supposed to make it less clinical.

**pocketbook, n.**

**1. pocket notebook**

**2. billfold**

In Britain a lady's handbag is always called a *bag* or a *handbag*, never a *pocketbook*. That term is reserved there for a *pocket notebook* or a *folding wallet*, which the British also call a *notecase* or *billfold*.

**podge, n.***Inf. fatty*

*Inf.* Podge gives rise to the adjective *podgy*, which has its American equivalent in *pudgy*. See also **fubby**.

**po-faced, adj.***approx. impassive*

*Slang.* A *po-faced* person is one who exhibits a deliberately blank expression, a poker face, to his audience. There is more than a hint of hauteur in this epithet. See **po**.

**pogged, adj.***Slang. stuffed*

*Slang.* After too much food: *I'm pogged!*

**point, n.****1. electrical socket****2. railroad switch**

1. *Point* often appears as *electrical point* or *power point*. Sometimes it is used in combination with another word, as in *razor point*, thus indicating an electrical outlet to be used for a particular purpose.

**point duty.** See **pointsman, 1.**

**pointsman, n.****1. traffic policeman****2. switchman**

1. *Point duty* is the *traffic detail* and a *policeman on point duty* is a *traffic cop*.
2. The railroad man in charge of switches.

**poker school****poker session****policy, n.****landscaped ground**

The landscaped area around a country house. Usually in the plural, the *policies*, and more common in Scotland than in England.

**politician, n.****1. approx. government official****2. political scientist**

Going back a few years, a *politician* was one, whether or not in power at the moment, skilled in the science of government and politics generally. The term had little, if any, pejorative implication as in America, where it brings to mind the scheming and manipulation characteristic of party politics: unenlightened self-interest, the smoke-filled room. Until recently in Britain, a *statesman* was merely a higher order of *politician* in the British sense, the recognition of whose service, experience, wisdom, and resulting power entitled him to the more eminent label. Until recently, *politicians* in Britain were still *statesmen*, whereas in America, *politicians* were *politicians*!

**polling-day, n.****election day**

The British also use the term *voting-day*, as well as the American term. Signs reading POLLING STATION appear where VOTE HERE signs would be posted in America.

**polo neck****turtleneck**

Applied to sweaters with high collars which are folded down, so that there is a close-fitting double layer around the neck. See also **turtle-neck**; **roll-neck**.

**polytechnic, n.**

A vocational or technical high school or college. Often shortened to *poly*.

*approx. community college*

**ponce, n., v.i.**

*Slang.* A much fancier British synonym is *souteneur*, taken over from the French, in which language its literal meaning is 'protector,' indicating something about certain French attitudes. To *ponce about* is to *swagger*, apparently on the assumption that ponces make a very good living and have the wherewithal to live it up.

**pimp****pond, n.**

Artificial or natural. In America, *pond* usually describes a body of water smaller than a lake. In Britain, it means a 'pool made by hollowing or embanking.' The British also use it as a verb. Transitivity, it means to 'dam up' (e.g., a stream); intransitively, of water, to 'form a pool.'

**pool****pong, n.**

*Slang.* No slang American equivalent.

*approx. stink*

**pontoon, n.**

A card game. *Pontoon* is a corruption of the French name for the game, *vingt-et-un*. The game is also known as *twenty-one*. A *pontoon*, of course, is a flat-bottomed boat serving as a bridge or ferry.

**blackjack****pony, n., Inf.**

£25

**poodle**

*Slang.* Pejorative used in political circles.

**puppet****poodle-faker, n.**

*Slang.* A quite specialized word, describing a naval officer who paid social visits ashore to curry favor in certain quarters.

SEE COMMENT

**poof, n.**

*Slang.* Derogatory term for male homosexual or an effeminate man. Sometimes spelled *pouf*; *pouffe*; *poove*; *puff*.

*Slang. pansy*

**poon, n.**

*Slang.* **Public school** slang, describing a *middle class jerk (twit)*—one of those hopelessly middle-class types frowned upon by those superior *public school* chaps. The adjective *poonish* is applied to genteel middle-class activities and functions, like sherry parties and flower shows. See synonyms under **git**.

*Slang. jerk*

**poop, n.**

*Slang.* Short for *nincompoop*.

*Slang. dope*

**poor tool**

*Inf.* To be a *poor tool* at an activity is to be a *total loss* at it, a *bust*.

*Inf. total loss*

**poove. See poof.**

**pop**, *n., v.t.*

1. *n., v.t., Inf.* **hock (pawn)**

2. *v.t.* **fasten**

1. *Slang.* *Popshop* means 'pawnshop.'

2. *Slang.* To fasten with **poppers**. Also, *pop up*.

**poplin**, *n.*

**broadcloth**

In Britain, *broadcloth* describes a special kind of woolen material. See **broadcloth**.

**popper**, *n.*

**snap**

Used to fasten articles of apparel. See also **snapper**; **pop**, 2.

**poppet**, *n.*

*Inf.* **sweetie**

*Inf.* A term of endearment used especially in describing or addressing little ones and pets.

**popsie**, *n.*

*Slang.* **cutie**

*Slang.* Originally the epithet for an *old man's* darling, but now extended to include anybody's *cutie*.

**porch**, *n.*

**covered approach to doorway**

**porridge**, *n.*

1. (cooked) **oatmeal**

2. SEE COMMENT

1. To *keep your breath to cool your porridge* is to 'keep your advice for your own use,' i.e., to practice what you preach. When shopping, don't ask for *oatmeal*; raw oatmeal is *oats* in Britain.

2. *Slang.* To *do porridge* is to 'serve time.' Synonymous with **do bird**. A popular television comedy series about life in prison is entitled "Porridge."

**porter**, *n.*

**doorman**

The British often use *hall porter* to distinguish a *doorman* from a *railway porter*. *Porterage* is used to describe the services of a doorman. Where an American would say that his apartment house has a *doorman*, the Briton would say that there is a *porter* at his **block of flats** or *porterage* is **laid on** with his *flat*. See also **commissionaire**.

**portmanteau**, *n.*

**blend word**

The figurative meaning is that of a made-up word combining the sounds and meanings of parts of two other words, like *squarson*, combination of *squire* and *parson*; *mingy*, combination of *mean* and *stingy*; *smog*, combination of *smoke* and *fog*, etc.

**posh**, *adj.*

*Inf.* **stylish smart**

**position**, *n.*

**situation**

*Position* has two British uses which one almost never hears in America: it means 'situation,' in the sense of 'location,' of a house or other building. The other British meaning is also 'situation' but in the figurative sense of the 'way things stand.' For instance: *The position is that the company is insolvent*, or, *Do you understand the position?*

**positive discrimination**

The promotion and encouragement of increased employment of members of minority groups and women.

**affirmative action****post, n., v.t.**

See also **G.P.O.**; **letter post**; **recorded delivery**.

**mail****postage (posting) and packing**

As used in mail order advertising, where the 'handling' charge often appears to ring in a wee bit of extra profit. See also **dispatch**.

**shipping and handling****postal course****correspondence course****postal shopping****mail order buying****postal van**

Railroad term.

**mail car****postal vote****absentee ballot****post-box**

The smallish red iron boxes in rural areas bear the initials of the sovereign in whose reign they were erected. A Briton will announce with pride that the box near his home is a V.R. box! Occasionally called *posting box* or *letter box*. See also **pillar-box**.

**mailbox****post-code, n.**

In Britain, a combination of numbers and letters. Example: NW5.

**zip code****poste restante**

Permanently borrowed from the French. Literally it means 'mail remaining' ('waiting to be picked up').

**general delivery****post-free****postpaid****post-graduate, adj.**

As in *post-graduate student*, *degree*, etc.

**graduate****postman, n.****mailman****postman's knock man**

*Inf.* The phrase means an 'unskillful hunter' (*shooter*, in Britain—see **shoot**) who fires two barrels at almost everything he spies on the wing and rarely hits anything.

**unskilled hunter****post-mortem**

More commonly used in Britain.

**autopsy****Post Office**

SEE COMMENT

Usual name for the **G.P.O.** Americans think of their post office as a place to mail letters and parcels and buy stamps and money orders. The *Post Office* in Britain has a much wider scope; see **G.P.O.**

**pot, n.****1. Slang. boodle****2. Slang. favorite (horse racing)****3. SEE COMMENT**

**1. Slang.** Used alone or in the expression *pots of money*. To *put the pot* on a horse at a British **race-course** is to *shoot your wad* or *bet your stack* at an American track. The British also use the expression to *go nap* on a horse to describe the same vice (see **nap**).

**2. Slang.** The *pot* is also British slang for the *favorite* in a horse race.

**3. Slang.** A British slang usage sometimes heard (occasionally lengthened to *pot-hunter*) is to describe a person who enters a contest not for the sport of it but only for the prize. Another British slang use is in the expression to *put* someone's *pot* *on*, which means to 'squeal on' him, or 'spill the beans,' for which the British also use the expression *blow the gaff*. A *big pot*, however, means something entirely different: **VIP**.

**pot, v.t.****Inf. potty**

**Inf.** To attend to a very young child's need.

**potato, n.****hole in one's sock**

**Slang.** **Wellingtons** are said to cause *potatoes*.

**pot-boy, n.****bartender's assistant**

*Potman* means the same thing. Literally, someone who helps out in a pub, but sometimes used figuratively in the sense of *prat boy* as a pejorative term meaning somebody at anybody's beck and call. See also **dog's body**.

**pot-house, n., Slang.****Inf. pub**

More formally known a *public house*.

**potted lecture****Slang. canned spiel**

**Inf.** A pre-set brief spiel, usually in the nature of a demonstration, often with slides. The author's dentist asked his hygienist to deliver her *potted lecture* on a new method of brushing teeth.

**potty, adj.****Slang. nutty**

**Inf.** The implication is eccentricity rather than outright lunacy, for example, **dotty** or **bonkers**.

**pouf, also pouffe. See poof.****poulterer, n.****poultry dealer**

Sometimes, **POULTER** appears on store signs.

**pour with rain****pour**

See also **bucket down**; **rain stair rods**.

**power point. See point.****poxing, adj.****plaguing**

**Slang.** Annoying, irritating. Cf. the archaic *a pox on . . .*!

**practical, n.****lab test**

**Inf.** Short for practical examination, like being given a frog to dissect in a biology exam.

**praeposter, preposter.** See **prefect**.

**pram, n.**

*Inf.* Short for *perambulator*.

**baby carriage**

**prang, v.t.**

**1. crash land (an aircraft)**

**2. bomb (a target)**

*Slang.* From meanings 1. and 2. the use of the word has been extended to cover non-aeronautical accidents as well, and even minor ones. One can *prang* a car in a collision, or merely one's knee or arm while working around the house. *Bump* would be the equivalent here.

**praties, n. pl. *Inf.***

*Slang.* **spuds**

**prawn, n.**

**small shrimp**

Small in American terms, because *shrimps* in Britain are generally tiny things compared to what Americans mean by the term. A Briton would consider a *prawn* a large, rather than a small, shrimp. What Americans think of as shrimps are generally called *scampi* in Britain, a term usually confined in America to cooked shrimps in restaurants with continental cuisine.

**prefect, n.**

*approx.* **monitor**

A school boy or girl who attains a quasi-official position to help keep order. In some **public schools**, called *praepostor* or *prepostor*. See also **head boy** or **girl**.

**preference shares**

**preferred stock**

**preggers, adj.**

*Slang.* Great with child.

*Slang.* **knocked up**

**Premium Bond**

**government lottery bond**

Monthly lottery drawings are held with cash prizes going to the holders of the bonds with lucky serial numbers. They bear no interest. In America the same phrase describes regular interest-bearing corporate bonds callable before maturity, on short notice, for redemption at a premium.

**prentice, adj.**

**amateurish**

*Inf.* As in, *It's only a prentice job*, or, *The novel is a prentice piece of work*. A *prentice hand* is an *inexperienced worker*.

**prep, n.**

**1. approx. homework**

**2. study hall**

*Inf.* Short for *preparation*. *Prep* is the name for both the work the student does to prepare for the next day's classes and for the session at boarding school at which he does it. *Prep* is usually supervised by a **prefect** or **master** who not only keeps order but is available to help the struggling student. Work to be done at home is called *homework* in Britain as well as in America.

**prep school**

**pre-preparatory school**

In this phrase, *prep* is an abbreviation of *preparatory*. A *prep school* is a private school for boys or girls who enter at the age of eight. It is called a *prep school* because it *prepares* the children for **public school**, which they enter at thirteen.

**presenter, n.****newscaster**

Or *commentator* generally. Sometimes heard as a credit at the end of a television program. See also **newsreader**.

**press-up, n.****push-up****pressure, n.****voltage**

So used by the Royal Navy in World War II.

**prezzy, n. Inf.****present (gift)****pricey (pricy), adj., Inf.****expensive****principal boy***approx. star*

A special designation pertaining to **pantomimes**, usually called *pantos*. The *principal boy* is always played by a girl, or should be. There is a *principal girl*, too; also a star; also a girl. The *principal boy* tradition has been broken occasionally in recent years, usually in the un-traditional glamorous pantos at the London Palladium.

**printed paper rates****third-class mail****prison van****police wagon**See **van**.**private, adj.****personal**

On envelopes, meaning that nobody but the addressee is to open.

**private bar.** See under **pub**.**private school**

SEE COMMENT

Etonians use the expression *private school* exclusively for *prep school* (in the British sense). A *private school* is a school supported solely by fees paid by parents. See **prep school**; **public school**.

**private treaty****contract**

In advertisements of real estate for sale, one often sees the phrase *for sale by private treaty*, which means that the common British practice of putting up real estate for sale at auction is not being followed in that case. Agreement between buyer and seller establishes the sale price.

**privy purse**

SEE COMMENT

Funds supplied by the British Government for the private expenses of the sovereign.

**prize, also prise, v.t.****pry open**

*Prize* is known in America but *pry* is more common; vice versa in Britain. In Britain one usually *prizes* open a lid etc.

**Prize Day.** See **Speech Day**.**proctor, n.***approx. college monitor*

A *senior proctor* and a *junior proctor* are selected each year at Oxford and Cambridge as officials charged mainly with disciplinary matters. To *proctorize* is to

exercise that function. The word is used in somewhat the same sense in some American colleges, with the emphasis on dormitory and examination discipline, but the American verb is *proctor*, same as the noun. *Prog* is the slang form, and can be used as a transitive verb, as in *He was progged*, university slang for 'reported by the proctor.'

**producer, n.**

**1. director**

**2. producer**

1. In the British theater, *producer* and *director* are both used to mean 'director' in the American sense, and *theatrical manager* means 'producer' in the American sense.

2. In the film industry *producer* and *director* are used as in America.

**prog.** See **proctor**.

**programme, n.**

**platform**

What Americans call the *platform* of a political party is called its *programme* in Britain. Also, *party manifesto*.

**prompt, n.**

**stage left**

See **opposite prompt**.

**(the) Proms, n. pl.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Short for *Promenade Concerts*, a series started by Sir Henry Wood in 1895, held annually during the summer.

**propeller shaft**

**drive shaft**

Automobile term. See also **Appendix II.E**.

**propelling pencil**

**mechanical pencil**

Scarcely seen today, having given way to the ballpoint pen.

**proper, adj., adv.**

*Inf.* **regular; real**

*Inf.* Used by the British as an intensive. If a friend should see you sipping lemonade in a pub, he might ask why you're not having a *proper* drink, i.e., a *real* drink, an *honest to goodness* drink. A *proper pushing lad* is a *real go-getter*. Less complimentary is an expression such as a *proper fool*, where the adjective emphasizes the degree of folly. *Good and proper* is an adverbial phrase in a sentence like, *I told him off good and proper!*

**property, n.**

**real estate**

A *property dealer* would be called a *real-estate operator* in America.

**provinces.** See under **regions**.

**proxy bomb**

**dummy bomb**

**P.T.**

*Inf.* **physical education**

*Inf.* Stands for *physical training*; usually abbreviated like its American counterpart.

**P.T.O.**

**over**

Placed at the bottom of the page and indicating *please turn over*. See also **overleaf**.

**pub, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* An approximate equivalent is *bar*. *Pub* is short for *public house*. Everybody in Britain has "his" *pub*. A synonym for *pub* is the **local**, which is short for the *local pub* (note that *local* can also mean 'native'; see **local**). Every pub has at least two bars: the *public bar* and the *saloon*, or *private bar*, which is appreciably more elegant; and drinks served in that room cost a little bit more. One is apt to find a carpet on the floor of the *saloon bar*, but the darts board, the bar-billiards table, and the shove-halfpenny board would normally be found in the *public bar*. See also **free house; tied; during hours; bitter; pint; landlord; pot-house; shebeen**.

**pub-crawl, n., v.i.****make the rounds (of pubs)**

*Inf.* To *pub-crawl* is to visit and give one's custom to one pub after another, and *pub-crawl* is also the noun describing this function.

**publican, n.***approx.* **saloon keeper**

The *publican*, also known as the *landlord* or *pubkeeper*, is the *proprietor* of a **pub**. See also **landlord**.

**public bar; public house.** See **pub**.

**public convenience****comfort station**

A battle of euphemisms, both meaning 'public toilet'; a municipal institution which still flourishes in British towns and villages but seems to be disappearing in America.

**public prosecutor****district attorney****public school***approx.* **private school**

In some ways a closer approximation might be *prep school*, but one must be careful to remember that in Britain **prep school** means 'pre-prep school' in the American sense. The British public schools are specially endowed and though highly individualistic in their traditions have organized a type of association and in common subscribe to certain standards. They are *private schools* in the American sense. In Britain, too, there are also certain fee-charging schools that are called *private schools*, but they are not *public schools* and are therefore not *public* in either the British or the American sense. See also **prep school; council school; Common Entrance Examination**.

**pudding, n.****dessert**

*Pudding* is often shortened to (*Inf.*) *pud*, rhyming with GOOD. But see **dessert**; see also **sweet; afters**.

**pudding club****pregnancy**

*Slang.* In the *pudding club* (or simply *in the club*) means 'pregnant.' See also **preggers** and in **pod**.

**pudsy, adj.****plump**

See also **podgy; fubsy**.

**puff, n.** See **poof**.

**pukka, adj.**

Of Hindi origin, meaning permanent, occasionally spelled *pucka* or *pukkah*; sometimes wrongly used to mean 'super' and 'smashing.' A *pukka sahib* is a real gentleman.

**genuine****pull, n.****1. extra measure****2. advantage**

1. When you get more beer (or other liquid refreshment) than you ask for in a pub, you get a *pull*, also known as a *long pull*. To dispense beer at a pub, a handle must be pulled. See also **long pull**.

2. To have a *pull* over someone is to have an *advantage* over him.

**pull down****tear down**

House-wrecking term.

**pulled down, Inf.****Inf. under the weather****pull one's socks up****Inf. shape up; get going**

*Inf.* To start moving, to show more stuff: He'd better pull his socks up if he wants to keep his job. Americans might say *pull himself together*. See also **buck up**.

**pull-up, n.****diner**

*Diners* in America can be anything from shabby to magnificent. *Pull-ups* are usually quite shabby, shacklike establishments. See also **café; transport café**.

**pull up****Slang. bowl over**

In the sense of 'make a deep impression on.' Thus: *It was a good play, but what really pulled me up was Derek's performance.*

**pull up sticks****Inf. pull up stakes**

*Inf.* Fold one's tent and move on. Cf. **up-stick**.

**pumpship, n. v.i.****(take a) pee**

*Inf.* (Stressed on the first syllable.) Sometimes two words: *pump ship*. Originally nautical, for *pump out the bilge*, it was extended to the general language to mean *urinate*.

**pun, v.t.****tamp**

*Pun* appears to be a variant of *pound*. A *punner* is a *tamper*, i.e., a tool with which one tamps the earth, rubble, etc.

**punch-bag, n.****punching bag**

Also given as *punching-bag*.

**punch-up. See dust-up.****puncture, n.****flat**

*Puncture* would sound old-fashioned or at least pedantic in America. *Flat* is slowly being adopted by the British.

**punka(h), n.****ceiling electric fan**

An Anglo-Indian term for a large fan, usually of cloth in a rectangular frame, hanging from the ceiling and operated by a rope pulled by a servant known as a *punka(h)-walla(h)*. By extension applied to ceiling electric fans, the kind one sees mostly in period movies. See **walla(h)**.

**punner.** See **pun.**

**punnet, n.**

**small fruit basket**

A *small basket* for vegetables or fruit, woven of thin pieces of wood that are known in Britain as **chip**. Strawberries and raspberries are sold in Britain by the *punnet*, which allegedly comes in one-pound and half-pound sizes, but the boxes often have crumpled paper at the bottom and thus contain as little fruit as possible.

**punter, n.**

**bettor**

Technically, to *punt* is to *bet against the house* in a card game; but informally it means to 'bet on a horse race' or 'speculate on the stock market,' and the usual meaning is 'bettor' or 'speculator' as the case may be. See **Appendix II.G.5** for British betting terms. *Punter* can also mean 'John' or 'trick' in the sense of 'prostitute's client.'

**purchase, hire.** See **hire-purchase; never-never.**

**purchase tax**

*approx.* **excise tax**

Now replaced by the *Value Added Tax*, usually abbreviated to V.A.T. or VAT, pronounced either way.

**purler.** See **come a purler.**

**purpose-built, adj.**

**built to order**

Especially built for a given purpose, according to specifications, like a movie theater built as such instead of having been converted from an opera house.

**purse, n.**

**money pouch**

Not used in Britain to mean 'lady's handbag.' See also **pocketbook.**

**push, n.**

*Slang.* **gate**

*Slang.* To *get the push* is to *get the gate, be fired.* See **sack.**

**push along, Inf.**

*Inf.* **get moving**

**push-bike**

*Inf.* **bike**

*Inf.* As distinguished from *motor-bike* and *moped*. Also called *push-bicycle* and *push-cycle*.

**pushcart, n.**

**baby carriage**

An occasional use; *pushcart* usually means 'handcart,' and the usual term for *baby carriage* is **pram**. *Pushcart* in the American sense is **barrow** in Britain.

**push-chair**

**stroller**

Child's folding chair on wheels.

**pushed for**

*Inf.* **pressed for**

*Inf.* In Britain, one is *pushed*, rather than *pressed*, for time, money, etc. *Pushed*, used alone, generally means 'pressed for time.' *Pushed for* suggests scarcely able to find enough *time, money, facilities, etc.*

**push off!**

*Slang.* **scram!**

*Slang.* Synonyms under **buzz off.**

**push-pin, n.**

Synonymous with **drawing-pin**.

**thumbtack****push the boat out**

1. *Inf.* **outdo oneself**

2. *Inf.* **treat**

1. *Inf.* To act more generously than the occasion requires; to be lavish, but not ostentatious. Often used in commenting on splendid entertainment one has enjoyed, particularly as a dinner guest: *They didn't half push the boat out!* See **half, 3**.

2. *Inf.* Often heard in the expression (*so-and-so's*) *turn to push the boat out*, meaning that it's his turn to pay for the next round of drinks, today's trip to the movies, and that sort of thing.

**put about**

1. *Inf.* **put out (be a nuisance)**

2. *Inf.* **plant (a rumor)**

1. *Inf.* As in: *I hate to put you about, but I really need the shipment by tomorrow.*

2. *Inf.* As in: *It was put about that they were almost bankrupt.*

**put a bung in it!**

*Slang.* **shut up!**

*Slang.* An alternative to **put a sock in it!** *Bung* is easier to visualize than *sock*, somehow.

**put a foot wrong**

*Inf.* **slip up**

*Inf.* Seen almost exclusively in the negative: *He'll never put a foot wrong*, indicating a meticulous person. Sometimes one sees *put a foot right*, also in the negative: *I can't put a foot right today* means 'I shouda stood in bed.'

**put a sock in it!**

*Slang.* **stow it!**

*Slang.* Or a *bung* if you prefer. The equivalent of *Belt up!* or *Pack up!* in Britain or *Shut up!* in America.

**put (someone's) back up**

*Inf.* **get (someone's) back up**

*Inf.* The American form is used as well.

**put by**

**brush aside**

As in: *The difficulties facing us cannot be put by indefinitely*, meaning *permanently deferred*.

**put down**

1. **put to sleep**

2. **charge**

3. *Inf.* **fold**

Three wholly unrelated meanings:

1. Euthanasia of pets. The British expression has now become common among dog breeders in America.

2. *Put it down, please*, is the way the customer asks the shop to charge it. Alternatively he might say, *Please book it to me*, or, *Book it to my account*. See also **on the slate; on tick**.

3. What a wise person does in a poker game when he senses that his chances are slim.

**put in hand.** See **have (something) put in hand.**

**put (someone) in the picture**

**explain the situation to (someone);  
bring (someone) up to date**

**put it across (someone)**

*Inf.* **let (someone) have it**

*Inf.* To *punish*. The teacher became angry at the obstreperous pupil and really *put it across him*. To *put (something) across* also has the usual American meaning of 'put it over,' i.e., *accomplish the objective*.

**put (someone) off**

**disturb**

*Inf.* To *put one off one's balance*, or *off one's stride*. *Off-putting* is an adjective describing the person or thing that has that effect. It seems just the least bit precious, perhaps jocularly, like other hyphenated adjectives ending in the participial *-ing*, like *shame-making*. It has the special flavor, sometimes, of *appetite-spoiling*, both literally and figuratively; it always connotes enthusiasm-dampening.

**put one's arse to anchor, Slang.**

**sit down**

**put one's back into**

*Slang.* **knock oneself out at**

*Slang.* Expressing the idea of arduous devotion to a task at hand. See also **do one's nut, 1.**

**put one's feet up**

**relax**

*Inf.* A dinner hostess might say to a tired friend: *Come earlier and put your feet up*. Putting one's feet up connotes easy chairs, possibly a brief nap, freshening up, and in the case of a really kind hostess, even a drink.

**put one's head down**

*Inf.* **get some shuteye**

*Inf.* Also *get one's head down, snooze*.

**put one's hoof in, Inf.**

*inf.* **get a word in edgewise**

**put one's shirt on, Inf.**

*Inf.* **bet one's bottom dollar on**

**put on side**

*Slang.* **put on the dog**

*Slang.* See also **side, 2.**

**put paid to**

*Inf.* **finish**

*Inf.* In the sense of 'put an end to.' Thus: *The rain put paid to our picnic*. Derived from the image of stamping 'paid' on a bill, thus putting an end to that transaction.

**put (someone's) pot on**

*Slang.* **squeal on (someone)**

*Slang.* To *put Harry's pot on* is to *squeal on Harry*.

**put the boot in, Inf.**

**1. kick hard  
2. take a decisive step**

**put the 'phone down**

**hang up**

Not as in America, where it means putting it down for a moment, as when interrupted by a knock on the door.

**put the pot.** See **pot**, 1.

**put the shutters up**

*Inf.* **fold**

*Slang.* To go broke and, if necessary, into bankruptcy.

**put the wind up.** See under **get the wind up.**

**put-to**, *n.*

*Slang.* **brass tacks; crunch**

*Slang.* The Prime Minister makes brave speeches and fine promises, but when you get down to the put-to . . .

**putty**, *n.*

**muddy bottom**

*Nautical slang.* The kind of stuff you should be careful not to get your keel stuck in.

**put up**

1. *v.t.*, **raise**

2. *v.i.*, **run for office**

1. The rent is *put up* in Britain, *raised* in America.

2. Short for *put up the deposit* required of candidates.

**put up a black**

*Inf.* **fall on one's face**

*Inf.* To get a black mark; close to **blot one's copybook.**

**put up the hare**, *Inf.*

*Inf.* **get something going**

**put up the shutters**, *Slang.*

**go into bankruptcy**

**pye-dog**, *n.*

**mongrel**

Also *pie-dog* and *pi-dog*. Term used in India for an ownerless mongrel, running wild.

**pylon**, *n.*

**high tension tower**



**Q.C.** See **take silk**.

**quad, n.**

*approx.* **campus**

*Inf.* Oxford University term, short for *quadrangle*. It denotes a square bounded by college buildings rather than the whole campus. Some American colleges also use the term *quad*. The Cambridge equivalent is **court**.

**quadrillion.** See **Appendix II.D**.

**quant, n., v.t., vi.**

**boat pole**

A *quant* is a punting pole with a flange near the tip to prevent its sinking into mud, used to propel the boat along. As a verb, to *quant* is to pole the boat, or to punt.

**quantity, bill of.** See **bill of quantity**.

**quantity surveyor**

**materials appraiser**

Particularly in the contracting business, with expert knowledge of specifications and prices.

**quarrel with one's bread and butter**

*Inf.* **bite the hand that feeds one**

*Inf.* Generally, like its American equivalent, restricted to negative statements, e.g., *One shouldn't quarrel with one's bread and butter*. So don't quit your job until you have lined up a new one.

**quart, n.** See **Appendix II.C.2**.

**quarter, n.**

**quarter of a pound**

*Inf.* One asks for a *quarter* of those chocolates (pointing) at the **sweet-shop**. *Quarter of a pound* would sound ponderous in Britain. This would apply equally, of course, to mushrooms at the **greengrocer's**, nails at the **ironmonger's**, etc.

**quarter-day, n.**

*approx.* **due date**

*Quarter-days* are the four days in the year when quarterly payments traditionally fall due in Britain and are the common dates for tenancy terms. They are: **Lady Day** (March 25); **Midsummer Day** (June 25); **Michaelmas Day** (September 29); **Christmas Day** (December 25).

**quartern, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Four-pound loaf of bread*, but now archaic.

**quaver, n.**

**eighth note**

Musical term. See **Appendix II.F**.

**(the) Queen**

1. SEE COMMENT

2. SEE COMMENT

1. *Inf.* To stay at a dance through *the Queen* is to stay to the very end. It is usual to play *God Save the Queen* to close the proceedings, and *the Queen* in this context is simply short for the title of the national anthem.

2. *Inf.* The toast to the Queen, known as the **Loyal Toast**.

**Queen Mum.** *See* mummy.**queer, adj.***Inf.* **queasy**

*Inf.* *Unwell* or *indisposed*, not really ill. *I went queer* has no homosexual connotations whatsoever. See also **sick**.

**queer card, Inf.***Slang.* **oddball****(in) Queer Street***Inf.* **hard up**

When the British talk of somebody's being *in Queer Street*, they mean that he or she is in bad trouble, in a bad way, in bad odor. The expression originates in the custom of writing *Quaere* ('enquire') against a person's account when it was considered advisable to make enquiries about him before trusting him.

**queer the pitch****stymie; thwart**

To *queer someone's pitch* is to *thwart him*, to *spoil his chances* before he begins. A *pitch* is part of a **cricket ground** (field); in **football** (soccer) *pitch* is used to describe the entire playing field. To *queer someone's pitch*, then, is to *mess up his game*, not literally, but figuratively in the sense of 'spoiling his chances.' There are some however, who claim that this term is not derived from cricket, but from **pitch** in the sense of the territorial prerogative of bookmakers and outdoor entertainers on the streets of London and other cities.

**quench, v.t.****squelch**

To *shut* (somebody) *up*.

**query, n., adv.**1. *n.* **complaint**2. *adv.* **approximately**

1. *n.* This connotation of *query* is not met with in America. It appears most frequently in the phrase *query department* of an organization.

2. *adv.* *Query*, after an adjective, indicates that the adjective is only approximate, and the quality or quantity expressed is somewhat doubtful or questionable. A teacher might characterize a student's performance (the British often use **alpha**, **beta**, **gamma**, rather than **A**, **B**, **C** in marking) as *beta-alpha query*, or *beta, query alpha*, i.e., *somewhere between A and B but I don't know exactly where*, or *beta, query minus* (*B, but perhaps a bit closer to B minus*).

**question in the House**

SEE COMMENT

*There'll be a question in the House* means, 'This is going to be brought up in Parliament at 'question time' (the period when **Members** may question **ministers**). The nearest American equivalent would be: *This is going to be brought up in Congress*, but more likely before a House or Senate committee.

**queue, n., v.i.****line; line up**

(Pronounced CUE.) The verb sometimes takes the form *queue up*. Foreigners are often surprised at the self-imposed discipline that leads the British to form

*queues*. Queue-jumping leads to very positive remonstrations. Americans stand either *in* or *on* a line; but Britons stand only *in* a queue. See **Appendix I.A.1**.

**quick as thought**, *Inf.*

*Inf.* **quick as a wink**

**quid**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

*Slang*. One pound (£), referring to British money, not weight. No American slang equivalent except *buck* for *dollar*. In general use, unlike many other slang currency terms. See also **have a quid each way**.

**quid each way**. See **have a quid each way**.

**quieten**, *v.t., v.i.*

**quiet down**

**quintillion**. See **Appendix II.D**.

**Quis?**

**Who wants this?**

*Inf.* Public school and upper middle class cant, pronounced *quiz*, addressed by an individual amid a group of his or her peers. The 'this' can be anything from the remains of something being eaten to a comic book or any old bit of anything found while cleaning out a desk. The affirmative answer is *Ego* (a suitable Latin answer to a question in Latin); the negative response is *fains*. See **fains I!**

**quite**, *adj.*

*Inf. approx.* **up to snuff**

*Inf.* *Quite* used as an adjective—not as an adverb modifying an adjective or an adverb—is found in negative expressions only, such as: *He isn't quite*, meaning, 'He isn't quite acceptable socially.'

**quite**, *adv.*

**absolutely**

Used alone, as a response, expressing more or less emphatic agreement; roughly equivalent to *That goes without saying*. 'Are you planning a party!' 'Quite.'

**quiz**, *v.t.*

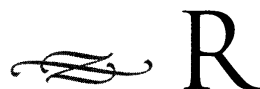
*Inf.* **poke fun at**

*Quiz* originally meant to 'make fun of' and also to 'look curiously at,' but because of the popularity of American television quiz programs, the more common meaning of the word in Britain now is the American one, i.e., to 'interrogate.'

**quod**, *n.*

*Slang.* **pokey**

*Slang*. *Clink*, a slang term in both countries, is derived from an actual prison of that name in Southwark (London) where there is still a *Clink Street*. The old prison is long gone. See also **porridge, 2**.

**rabbit, n.**

*Inf.* In sports, a beginner or a player of little skill; a *duffer*.

*Inf. dub*

**rabbit on**

*Slang.* On and on and on. Originates from rhyming slang (see **Appendix II.G.3.**) *rabbit and pork* (shortened to *rabbit*) for *talk*.

**jabber away****R.A.C.**

Abbreviation for Royal Automobile Club.

**race-course, n.**

The British never use *race-track* for horse racing but do use the term for auto racing and use *dog-track* for greyhound racing.

**racetrack****Rachmanism, n.**

*Inf.* The practice of taking over lower-class residential property and deliberately creating intolerable living conditions in order to force the poor tenants to get out, so that the landlord can then turn the property to more profitable commercial uses. The term is derived from a man named Rachman, who in the 1960s pioneered in this type of manipulation.

SEE COMMENT

**racialist, n., adj.**

And *racialism* is *racism*.

**racist****rackety, adj., Slang.**

*Slang.* **harum scarum**

**rack-rent, n.,**

*Rack-renting* is the wicked practice of exacting excessive rent from tenants.

**extortionate rent****R.A.D.A.**

(Pronounced RA-DA as an acronym.)

**Royal Academy of Dramatic Art****radiogram, n.**

*Radiogram* is no longer heard much in Britain or in America.

**radio-phonograph****R.A.F.**

This doughty band, who fought the Battle of Britain, are almost invariably referred to by their initials.

**Royal Air Force****rag, v.t., v.i., n.**

1. *v.i., v.t., Inf.* **fool around; tease**

2. *n., Inf.* **stunt; gag**

1. *Inf.* *Rag* is used intransitively to mean 'fool around' or 'kid around,' in a manner involving a little mild horseplay. Transitive it means to 'tease' or to 'pull someone's leg.'

2. *Inf.* A *rag* is a *stunt* or *gag* and from this use we get *rag-week*, which is a week at the university during which students put on *stunts* in aid of charity, especially dressing up and riding around on weird and grotesque floats.

**rag-and-bone man**, *Inf.*

A peddler who deals in old clothes etc.

*Inf.* **junkman**

**raglan**. See under **Balaclava**.

**raid**, *n.*

In America *raid* brings up the image of a group assault of one sort or another, particularly military or police. One reads in British newspapers of a *raid* made last night on a house or shop. All it means is a 'burglary,' the work of one or more persons called *raiders*. A *share raid* is something different: an attempt to gain control of a corporation by buying up shares of stock through tempting offers to shareholders, a takeover attempt.

**burglary**

**railway, scenic**. See **scenic railway; switchback**.

**rain stair-rods**

*Inf.* Synonymous with **bucket down; pour with rain**.

*Inf.* **rain cats and dogs**

**raise the wind**. See **get the wind up**.

**rake up**

*Inf.* In the sense of 'procure with difficulty.' Also used in Britain in the usual American sense of 'bring up an old sore subject,' like a complaint or a scandal.

*Inf.* **dig up**

**rally**, *v.t., Inf.*

A good-natured act.

*Inf.* **pull (someone's) leg; kid**

**ramp**, *n.*

1. A special use, to denote a bump deliberately built into a private or restricted road to encourage people to drive slowly; synonymous with **rumble strip**. The term is used as well to denote the point at which the true and the temporary surfaces join where road repairs are going on. The road signs say BEWARE RAMP. The *bump* in question is occasioned by the fact that the temporary surface is at a somewhat higher level.

2. *Slang.* *Ramp* is also sometimes used as transitive or intransitive verb meaning 'swindle.'

**1. bump**

**2. Slang. racket**

**randy**, *adj., Slang.*

*Slang.* **horny**

**ranker**, *n.*

**1. soldier in the ranks**

**2. officer risen from the ranks**

**rape**, *n.*

Don't be alarmed if you see one *rape* after another when you look at an old map of the County of Sussex, England. That is what the six old divisions of the county used to be called.

SEE COMMENT

**rare, adj.***approx. Inf. great*

*Inf.* **Rare** is an informal intensive. A *rare* lot of something is a *helluva* lot of it. *Rare* also implies *excellence*. A *rare* something is a *splendid* something. A *rare* time is a *swell* time; a *rare old* time is even sweller. But watch out, because in the expression *have a rare time of it*, *rare time* means quite the opposite: a 'tough time.'

**rate, n.****local tax**

Usually in the plural, meaning 'local real estate taxes.' A *ratepayer* is a local *taxpayer*.

**Rather!, interj., Inf.***Inf.* **And how!**

Also translatable as 'without doubt!'

**rating, n.****able seaman**

Low rank of British sailor, just above *ordinary seaman*.

**rats!***Slang.* **baloney!**

*Slang.* Also 'Nonsense' or 'I can't believe it.'

**rattling, adj., adv.****1. brisk****2. Slang. damned**

1. *Inf.* A *rattling* pace is a *brisk* one.

2. *Inf.* A *rattling* good wine is an *unusually* good one or more likely a *damned* good one. In the adverbial use, *rattling* has about the same meaning as **ripping**.

**raver, n.***Slang.* **knockout**

*Slang.* In the sense of *raving beauty*. Synonymous with the old-fashioned Britishisms *stunner*, *smasher*, etc.

**ravers.** See **stark ravers**.**(have a) rave-up, n.***Slang.* **(have a) ball**

*Slang.* A *helluva* good time.

**razzle, n.***Slang.* **spree; binge; toot**

*Slang.* Americans go on a *spree*; happy Britons go on *the razzle*. They also go on *the spree* (note the definite article). See **Appendix I.A.2**.

**R.D.****insufficient funds**

These letters are an abbreviation of **Refer to drawer**, a bank indication of incipient penury.

**R.D.C.**

SEE COMMENT

These letters are short for *Rural District Council*, the governing body of a *rural district*, once an area comprising a group of parishes, now become obsolete since the creation of *district councils*. See **council; parish**.

**reach-me-down, adj.***Inf.* **ready-made**

*Slang.* As a plural noun *reach-me-downs* became slang for *ready-made clothes*. It may have come from the image of a salesperson *reaching* to get a stock garment *down* off a shelf. Not heard now: *off-the-peg* is the common term, and *ready-made* is creeping in. Unrelated to American *hand-me-down*.

**read, v.t.****major in**

One *reads* philosophy at Oxford, for example, or law, or chemistry. An American *majors* in philosophy or some other subject.

**read, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A *read* is a spell of reading, time spent in reading, an opportunity to read: 'The reviewer said my novel was a good *read*.'

**reader, n.***approx.* **associate professor**

In a British university, the order of academic hierarchy is assistant lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer, *reader*, and professor. The term *professor* is more exclusive than in America, where it covers the grades of assistant professor and associate professor, as well as (full) professor. See also **don**; **Fellow**; **master**.

**reading glass****magnifying glass****read (someone; something) up****read up on (someone; something)**

For example, *I read him up before interviewing him*, or, *I read the subject up before lecturing on it*.

**(the) ready, n.***Slang.* **dough**

*Inf.* *Ready* is colloquially short for *ready cash*. Sometimes, *the readies*. Synonymous with **brass**; **dibs**; **lolly**.

**ready for off, Inf.****ready to go****reafforest, v.t., v.i.****reforest**

The noun is *reafforestation*. Both countries use *afforest* to describe the planting of land with trees, but they differ in describing the renewal of forest cover.

**real jam. See jam.****rebate, n.****rabbet**

Term used in carpentry. But American carpenters (**joiners**) say *rabbet*.

**recce, n.***Inf.* **gander (look-see)**

*Inf.* An abbreviation of *reconnaissance* which became the official term among the military from World War I days, when one *went out on a recce*. It is pronounced RECKY and is in the general language. *Shall we try that pub? Let's have (or do) a recce first*. See also **shuffy**.

**Received Pronunciation**

SEE COMMENT

Commonly called *R.P.* An accent confined virtually to English people and those educated at English **public schools**. *R.P.* speakers believe their speech has no indication of where they were born or live.

**reception, n.****1. office**  
**2. front desk**

1. A sign on a place of business reading *Reception* would read *Office* in America.
2. *Reception* at a hotel would be known as the *desk* or *front desk* in America; and the *reception clerk* or *receptionist* at a hotel is called *room clerk* in America.

**reception-room**

A room available for receiving visitors or company.

**waiting room****record card****index card****recorded delivery***Approx.* **certified mail**

The post office (**G.P.O.**) gives one a *certificate of posting (mailing)* but holds on to the *certificate of delivery*. *Registered post* is the approximate equivalent of *special handling*, and allows insurance up to a certain sum. An *A.R.* (*advice of receipt*, also known as *advice of delivery*) is the approximate equivalent of a *return receipt* in America.

**recorder, n.****criminal court judge****recovery van****tow car**

Also called *wrecker* in America.

**red as a turkey-cock, Inf.***Inf.* **red as a beet****red biddy****dago red**

*Slang.* Any cheap red wine or a shot of whisky in a glass of such wine. See also **plonk**.

**redbrick university**

SEE COMMENT

A British university other than Oxford and Cambridge. The name is derived from the use of red brick in the building of the first universities established after the original old ones, which were constructed of gray stone. Now, *redbrick universities* are built of whatever pleases the architect. Used alone, as an adjective, *redbrick* connotes a "self-made" image as opposed to the privileged, upper-class image of Oxford. See also **Oxbridge**.

**redcap****military policeman****redemption fee****prepayment penalty**

A term used in mortgage financing; the fee charged for paying off before maturity.

**Red Indian****Indian**

Meaning 'American Indian.' When a Briton says *Indian* he means a 'native of India.' If he has in mind an *American Indian*, he says *Red Indian*.

**redirect, v.t.****forward**

Directions to post office on envelope: *Redirect to . . .* Americans would write *Forward to . . .*

**red rag***Inf.* **red flag**

*Inf.* Usually in the phrase *a red rag to a bull*, meaning something that enrages a bull.

**redundant, adj.****(made or become) unemployed**

This harsh word normally used in Britain describes a person who has lost his or her job because of automation, reorganization, or deterioration of economic conditions generally, and not through poor job performance. *Redundancy* is the

equally oppressive noun for the condition. To *make someone redundant* is to terminate his employment, or fire him, or let him go. In the plural, *redundancies* means *unemployment generally*, in a sentence like: *There has been a considerable increase in redundancies in that area.* *Redundant* is met with occasionally, in British usage, in the sense of *superfluous*, as in *Home computers will make newspapers redundant*, or *Improved widespread electronic communications systems will make daily trips to the office redundant.* The word is not used that way in America. It is used, commonly in Britain and exclusively in America, in its grammatical application, to indicate tautology (as in *free gift*).

**reel, n.**

*Reel of cotton* is *spool of thread*. See also **cotton**.

**spool**

**referee**

*A referee is one who gives someone a reference* for employment, admission to a club, etc. *Referee* has many of the other meanings intended in America.

**reference**

**refer to drawer**

*Refer to drawer*, discreetly written in red on the upper left-hand corner of the face of the check (**cheque**) explains that the check writer's bank doesn't trust him, and returns the check to the payee's bank, which then debits the payee's account. If the check writer's bank trusts its depositor, the legend (still in red ink) is lengthened to: *Refer to drawer; please re-present* (note hyphen). See also **overdraft**, which is quite another matter in Britain. See also **Queer Street**.

**insufficient funds**

**Reform Jew**

See also **Liberal Jew**.

**Conservative Jew**

**refuse tip**

See also **tip**. *Refuse collector* has now been replaced by **sanitation officer**, the new official name for **dustman** (garbage man).

**garbage dump**

**(the) regions, n. pl.**

The country outside London and the **Home Counties**. This is a relatively new term for what used to be called *the provinces*. It has implications of **devolution** (home rule) and local identity.

SEE COMMENT

**register, v.t.**

The British *register* their *luggage*. The Americans *check* their *baggage*.

**check**

**registered post.** See **recorded delivery**.

**Register Office**

Often incorrectly called *Registry Office* by the British. A *registry* is something quite different, as shown below.

**marriage clerk's office**

**registrar, n.**

Hospital term describing a doctor on call who is an assistant to a specialist.

**resident doctor**

**registry, n.**

Where you go if you have the money to seek domestic servants.

**domestic employment agency**

**relief, n.**

Income-tax terminology. On your British income tax return you get *relief* for business expenses and *relief* for dependents. The analogous American terms would be *deductions* and *exemptions*. *Tax relief*, as a general term, would be called *tax benefit* in America.

**deduction; exemption**

**relief, out- or outdoor.** See **outdoor relief**.

**remand home**

*Reform school* is used in both countries. See also **borstal**.

**reformatory****Remembrance Sunday**

Formerly *Remembrance Day*. The Sunday nearest November 11, originally called *Armistice Day* in both countries, a day for honoring the memory of those who fell in World War I (the **Great War** in Britain). After World War II the concept was enlarged to embrace the additional victims, and the names were correspondingly modified.

**Veterans' Day****remembrancer, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Still seen in the official titles *Queen's* (or *King's*) *Remembrancer*, an officer charged with the collection of debts due the monarch, and *City Remembrancer* (usually shortened to *Remembrancer*), who represents the City of London (see **City**) before committees of Parliament. With a lower-case *r* it has the same meaning in both countries: 'reminder,' 'memento.'

**remission, n.**

For good behavior; a term in penology.

**time off****remould, n., v.t.**

The British *remould their tyres*; the Americans *retread their tires*.

**retread****removals, n. pl.**

Thus, on a business sign: J. SMITH & COMPANY, REMOVALS. On large moving vans it is common to see the phrase REMOVAL SPECIALISTS. See also **pantechnicon**.

**moving****remove, n.****1. degree removed****2. partial school promotion**

1. This meaning is shared with America, where it is seen much less frequently than in Britain. The British speak of something which is one *remove* from the **dust-bin**, which means 'one step removed' from the garbage can, i.e., just about ready to be thrown out; or something may be based at *several removes* from something else, thus constituting a thinly disguised plagiarism in the arts, for instance.

2. A *partial promotion* at school, moving the student up a half-grade. It has nothing whatever to do with being removed from school. In some schools a *remove* does not mean the *promotion* but rather the *intermediate grade* itself to which the student is promoted if he is not poor enough to stay back but not good enough to go up a whole grade.

**renter, n.**

In the special sense of 'film distributor.'

**exhibitor****rent-protected, adj.**

Referring to government protection of tenants.

**rent controlled**

**repairing lease**

Under which the tenant pays all the maintenance expenses, including real estate taxes (**rates**) and a net rental to the landlord. The complete technical label is *full repairing and insuring lease*.

**net lease****reserve, n.**

1. surplus
2. reservation

1. Term used in corporate finance.

2. As in *game reserve*; *Indian reserve*. *Reservation* in this sense is strictly American.

**reserve price****upset price**

At auctions, the lowest price at which an item will be sold.

**reset, v.t., v.i.****receive (stolen goods)****resident, n.****person registered at a hotel**

Nothing to do with domicile. See **non-resident**.

**residual estate****residuary estate**

A term relating to the administration of estates denoting what's left after expenses, debts, taxes, and specific and cash legacies.

**responsions, n. pl.**

SEE COMMENT

Oxford entrance examination, originally the first of three examinations for an Oxford B.A. and colloquially called **smalls**. The name was later applied to the entrance examination, which was abolished in 1960. There are now two examinations: **moderations** (called *mods*) and *final schools* (called **Greats** when the subject is classics).

**restaurant car****dining car**

Another British name for this luxury, which is beginning to disappear in Britain, is *buffet car* (see **buffet**). The menu in a buffet car is, however, much more restricted.

**resurrection gate. See lich-gate.****resurrection pie, Slang.****dish made of leftovers****retrospective, adj.****retroactive**

Describing the effect, e.g., of a statute applicable to past actions or events.

**return, n.****round-trip ticket**

In Britain one might ask for a *return* to London on the train or bus, meaning a 'round-trip ticket.' A *day return* is valid only that day on certain trains; one can also purchase a *period return* where the return journey must be completed by a specific date. A one-way ticket is called a *single*.

**return, v.t.****elect**

The electorate *returns* a candidate. There is an echo of this usage in *election returns*.

**return post****return mail**

**(the) Revenue, *n.***

The technical names of the central taxing authorities are *Inland Revenue Department* (Britain) and *Internal Revenue Service* (United States). The British often shorten their name to *the Revenue*; the common names in America are *the I.R.S.* and *the Treasury*. *Revenue*, as the subject of a sentence written by a Briton, would be followed by a plural verb: *Revenue have expressed the opinion . . .* See **Appendix I.A.4**. Also **inland**.

**Treasury; I.R.S.**

**reverse camber.** See under **camber**.

**reverse-charge call.** See **transferred charge call**.

**reversionary interest****remainder (interest)**

In British law, a *reversionary interest* is an interest in property that vests after an intervening interest like a life estate or the right to income for a stated period. In American law, a *reversionary interest* or *reversion* is an interest retained by the creator of a trust, which takes effect after the termination of the trust.

**revise.** See **revision**.

**revision, *n.*****review**

A school term for reviewing past work in preparation for examinations. Also, as a transitive verb, *revise* meaning *review*. Thus, *We are now revising all our Latin verbs*. See also **prep**.

**rhino, *n.*****Slang. dough**

**Slang.** The wherewithal. See also **ready; lolly; brass**.

**rhubarb, *n.*****stage mob noise**

**Inf.** English actors murmur or shout 'rhubarb' to one another to simulate crowd noises.

**ribbon development****linear suburban expansion**

Building development parallel to a highway, between villages or towns, containing residences, shops, necessary services, etc., instead of circular expansion, thus (theoretically) tending to preserve more of the green belt, but not looked upon with favor.

**rick, *n., v.t.*****haystack**

A 'loose pile' of anything, like hay or brush. As a verb it means 'stack.'

**ride, *n.*****forest riding-path**

There is an uncommon American use of *ride* as a noun denoting a road built especially for riding. As used in Britain, *ride* implies that the road in question runs through the woods. Such roads anywhere help reduce the risk of forest fires. In Britain, there are some country lanes called 'Ride,' rather than 'Lane' or 'Street.'

**riding, *n.*****SEE COMMENT**

Subdivision of a county. Not used except with respect to Yorkshire, which is understood in the names the *North Riding*, the *East Riding*, and the *West Riding*. There are only three, because *riding* was originally *thridding*, meaning a 'one-third

part.' *Thridding* lost its *th* because it was hard to pronounce after *North*, *East*, and *West*.

**right**, *adj.*

*Inf.* **real**

*Inf.* Used like *proper*, as in *He's a right hero*, or *She's a right friend*. Usually humorous; sometimes ironical, as in the case of a friend who turned out to be of the fair weather variety. See also **proper**.

**right**, *interj.*

*Inf.* **sure! O.K.!**

*Inf.* A term of assent to an order or proposal, not to a statement.

**rig-out**, *n.*

*Inf.* **getup**

*Inf.* A person's unusual outfit or attire.

**ring book**

**loose-leaf notebook**

**ring doughnut**. See **doughnut**.

**ring-road**; **ringway**, *n.*

**beltway**; **by-pass**

A single route around a town; a *bypass*. In a big city like London, it can consist of a succession of streets constituting a route arranged to avoid congested points. See also **orbital**.

**rip**, *n.*

*Inf.* **hell raiser**

*Inf.* Literally, a *lecher*, a man of lax morals, but more commonly much less pejorative, with the emphasis on mischief and usually applied to youngsters.

**ripping**, *adj.*

*Inf.* **great**

*Slang.* *Ripping* is also used as an adverb with *good*: one can have a *ripping* time or a *ripping good* time. Once in a while one hears the adverb *rippingly*, as in *Things went rippingly*. Practically out of the language now. See also **rattling**.

**rise**, *n.*

**1. raise**

**2. gain**

**1.** In salary.

**2.** On the stock market. And a *fall* is a *loss*. Some newspaper stock market reports list the number of *rises* and *falls*, rather than *gains* and *losses*.

**rise**, *v.i.*

**adjourn**

The House (of Commons) *rises* for the summer recess or at the end of a session.

**rising**, *adv.*

*Inf.* **going on**

*Inf.* Used only in expressions of age, as in *she is sixteen, rising seventeen*. Synonymous with **coming**.

**rising powder**

**baking powder**

Both terms are used in Britain.

**rising damp**. See **damp course**.

**risk**, *at*. See **at risk**.

**riveting, adj.****fascinating; absorbing**

A participial adjective to describe something that attracts and holds one's attention, to the exclusion of whatever else is happening; that glues one to his chair or keeps one on the edge of it. *Too riveting* means 'terribly exciting.' *Positively riveting* means 'utterly fascinating.'

**roach, n.****small carplike fish**

Caught for sport only in streams and an occasional moat. Eaten very rarely, if at all, nowadays.

**road-metal.** See **metalled road.****road, n.****way**

*Inf.* The British use *road* in a number of instances where Americans use *way*. In *someone's road* means 'in someone's way,' and to *get out of someone's road* is to *get out of his way*. But *railroad* is the common term in America, *railway* in Britain.

**road-sweeper, n.****street cleaner****Road Up****Road Under Repair**

Roadside warning sign.

**roadway, n.****pavement**

*Pavement* in Britain means 'sidewalk.'

**Road Works****Men Working**

Roadside warning sign.

**Robert.** See **bobby.****rocket, n.****Slang. hell**

*Slang.* A severe reprimand. To *get a rocket* is to *catch hell*.

**rod in pickle for.** See **have a rod in pickle for.****roger, n., v.t.****Slang. screw**

*Slang.* Vulgar slang for sexual intercourse. Also used as a verb: *roger someone*.

**rollie, also rolley.** See **roll-up.****roll-neck, adj.**

SEE COMMENT

Applied to sweaters with a loose, rolled down collar. See also **polo neck; turtle-neck.**

**roll-on, n.****girdle**

A lady's undergarment.

**roll-up**

SEE COMMENT

A hand-rolled cigarette. More common in Britain than in America. Also, *rollie; rolley*. See also **skin.**

**roly-poly pudding**

SEE COMMENT

Suet pudding wrapped in a cloth and steamed. Covered in jam. Called **spotted dog** when improved with currants or raisins.

**roneo, n., v.t.****duplicate**

*Inf.* On a roneo machine, a sort of mimeographing apparatus. Proprietary name *Roneo*.

**roof, n.****top**

In automobile context, a *roof* in Britain is a *hard top*. A soft one, i.e., a *convertible top*, is called a *hood* in Britain. See **Appendix II.E**.

**roofer, n.***Inf.* **bread-and-butter letter**

*Inf.* Synonymous with **Collins**.

**roof-rack, n.****luggage rack**

See **Appendix II.E**.

**roopy, adj., Slang.****hoarse****ropy, adj.***Slang.* **cheesy**

*Slang.* *Shabby*, coming apart at the seams, like threadbare clothes or a nearly extinct jalopy. It is occasionally used about oneself, as in *I'm feeling ropy as hell*. The usual circumstance is a hangover. See also **grotty**.

**rose, n.***Inf.* **frog**

*Inf.* In the sense of a 'flower holder,' i.e., the article on the bottom of a shallow vase into which you stick the stems.

**rot, v.t., v.i.****1. spoil****2. *Inf.* kid**

1. *Slang.* To *rot* a plan is to *spoil* it.

2. *Slang.* Intransitively, to *rot* is to *kid* or *kid around*.

**rot, n. Slang.****1. nonsense****2. SEE COMMENT**

1. Common to both countries, but much oftener heard in Britain.

2. A term expressing a sudden series of failures in an endeavor (business, sport, etc.) Thus, *A rot set in*.

**rota, n.****roster**

List of persons acting in turn. *By rota* means 'in turn': *Saturday morning surgery is taken by rota, by the three doctors in group practice*.

**rotten borough**

SEE COMMENT

In olden days, **Members** (of Parliament) represented *boroughs* (towns; *borough* comes from old English *burg*). A *rotten borough* was one which had degenerated in size, or even ceased to exist as a town, but continued to be represented in Parliament despite lack of a constituency.

**rough, n.****1. heavy work****2. *Slang.* tough**

1. *Slang*. The *rough* is used to indicate the *heavy work* around the house. Thus, there might be a companion type of servant who did the cooking but somebody else in the household to do the *rough*.
2. *Slang*. *Street rowdy; tough guy*.

**round, n., prep., adv.**

**1. sandwich**

**2. route**

**3. around**

1. The British use the word *sandwich* the way the Americans do. After all, it was said to be the Earl of Sandwich who ate meat between slices of bread during a twenty-four-hour gambling bout. But in a British pub you will more often hear the customers ask for a *round* of ham or a *round* of beef than for a *sandwich*. This is to distinguish a complete square from a diagonal half.
2. *Round* also means 'route,' in the sense of 'delivery route.' See also **country round; roundsman**.
3. In Britain, *round* is used in almost every case where *around* would be used in America. See also **about** for another British equivalent of the American *around*.

**roundabout, n.**

**1. traffic circle**

**2. merry-go-round**

2. See also **carousel**.

**rounders, n. pl.**

SEE COMMENT

Children's game resembling baseball.

**round on**

**1. Inf. turn on**

**2. Slang. squeal on**

1. *Inf.* To make some kind of unexpected answer to someone, implying an angry retort; to *let him have it*.
2. *Inf.* To *peach* on him.

**roundsman, n.**

**delivery man**

With a regular route; thus, the baker's *roundsman*, the milk *roundsman*. See **country round**.

**round the bend**

*Slang. crazy*

*Slang*. Usually in the expression *drive round the bend*, meaning 'drive crazy.' Also, **round the twist**.

**round the twist**. See **round the bend**.

**row-de-dow, n.**

**uproar**

*Inf.* Obsolescent.

**rowlock n.**

**oarlock**

(Pronounced ROLLOCK or RULLOCK).

**Rowton house**

SEE COMMENT

A type of lodging for poor men, with better conditions than what the British call a *common lodging-house*, one usually fitted out with a dormitory with beds that can be rented for the night. *Rowton houses* were named after Lord Rowton, an English social reformer (1838–1903) who became interested in London housing conditions and devised a plan for a hotel for poor men.

**royal, n.****member of the royal family***Inf.* Can also apply to foreign royalty.**Royal Commission**

SEE COMMENT

A body of persons appointed by the Crown to look into and file a report on some matter. Cf. **working party**. It would appear that, unlike a working party, a Royal Commission is all too often a device created to give a burial to a nagging question.

**rozzar, n.***Slang.* **cop**

*Slang.* An outmoded term. The British share *fuzz* with the Americans. See **bobby** for synonyms.

**R.P.** See **Received Pronunciation**.**R.S.M.**

SEE COMMENT

The initials stand for *regimental sergeant-major*, which in certain contexts has become a more or less generic bit of symbolism of the strict disciplinarian.

**rub along***Inf.* **get by**

*Inf.* As in *How do you manage without a steady job? Oh, we rub along.*

**rubber, n.****eraser**

It does not mean 'contraceptive' in Britain.

**rubbish!***Interj.* **nonsense!**

*Interj.* Or *tommyrot!* The British term is rarely used as an interjection in America.

**rub up the wrong way***Inf.* **rub the wrong way***Inf.* See **Appendix I.A.3**.**ruby wedding****40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary**

Marriages seem not to be made in heaven anymore, so today's Americans and Britons do not encounter many *ruby weddings*. Wedding observers in both countries use the same customs in designating what today are considered marathon anniversaries to be celebrated with gifts made of various materials and gems: silver for 25<sup>th</sup>, ruby for 40<sup>th</sup>, golden for 50<sup>th</sup>, and diamond for 75<sup>th</sup>.

**ruck, n.****1. common herd****2. *Slang.* also-rans****3. rugby scrum**

1. *Slang.* Usually seen in the phrase *common ruck*, or the phrase *ruck and truck*.

2. *Slang.* In a more limited sense, it refers to the main body of competition left out of the running.

3. *Slang.* A specialized meaning. See **scrum**.

**ruddy, adj.***Slang.* **damnable**

*Slang.* *Ruddy* came into use as a euphemism for **bloody**.

**rude, adj.****1. inconsiderate****2. frank****3. *Inf.* dirty (indecent)****4. robust**

Apart from its several common meanings shared with America, this adjective has several uses in Britain not found in America:

1. *Inconsiderate*, as in: *It is rude of me not to let you know my plans sooner.*
2. *Frank, outspoken, indiscreet*, as in: *May I be rude and tell you that I don't like your new hat?* Or, with a slightly different nuance, *May I be rude and ask you how much you paid for that car?*
3. *Indecent, improper*, as applied, e.g., to a joke, or a picture or statue.
4. As used in the expression *rude health*.

**rudery**, *n.*, *Inf.*

**piece of rudeness**

**rug**. See under **carpet**.

**rugger**. See **football**.

**rum**, *adj.*

*Inf.* **funny (peculiar)**

*Slang*. The usual meaning of *rum* is 'funny' in the sense of 'peculiar' or 'strange.' For example: *What a rum way to dress!* But in combination with certain nouns, *rum* has other meanings: a *rum customer* is a *dangerous customer*, a person not safe to meddle with; a *rum go* is a *tough break*; a *rum start* is a *funny thing* of the sort that so often happens on the way to the theater if one can believe comedians' patter; a *rum old do* is a *funny situation*, a *bizarre happening*; a *mixed-up affair*. (*We started out, it began to rain, we ran inside, the sun came out, we went out again, it began to pour with rain, we rushed back inside—it was a rum old do!*) All three words in this idiom are Briticisms. See **do** in this connection.

**rumble**, *v.t.*

*Inf.* **see through**

*Slang*. To see the real character of a person; to get to the bottom of a situation.

**rumble strip**

**speed bumps**

Raised bumps placed across a road to slow down motorists—a sensible precaution in both countries. See also **ramp**, 1.

**rumbustious**, *adj.*

**rambunctious**

*Inf.* Obstreperous; unruly.

**rum-butter**, *n.*

**hard sauce**

More or less interchangeable with **brandy-butter**, containing at least soft brown sugar, grated orange and lemon rind, butter, and rum. Served with rich fruit pudding, baked apple, baked banana, mince pie.

**rump steak**, *n.*

**sirloin**

The British use *sirloin*, but it refers to what the Americans call *porterhouse*. See **Appendix II.H**, and comment under **sirloin**.

**rumpy**, *n.*, *Inf.*

**Manx cat**

A tailless creature.

**run-away**, *n.*

**drain**

Something to let the water through.

**run in***Inf.* **break in**

*Inf.* What one does to new automobiles. The British *break in* wild horses but *run in* new cars.

**runner, n.****1. stringer****2. winner**

1. In the sense of part-time local newspaper correspondent.

2. Even if a few people do believe that the race is not always to the swift, we all have our ways of referring to outstanding ideas, painters, athletes, proposals, and all the rest. In America we wish to know the feasibility of something, the quality of someone, and the like—in short, will it fly? The British put it differently. They want to know whether someone or something will ever be good enough to get into a race—will it be a *runner*?

**runner beans****string beans**

Often shortened to *runners*.

**running account****checking account**

Synonymous with **current account**.

**running shed****roundhouse****run out****put out**

A **cricket** term. One of the ways a player is put out in this game.

**run the rule over****take a look at**

*Inf.* To go over something cursorily; examine it for correctness or adequacy. *This is my summary; would you be good enough to run the rule over it?*

**run-up, n.**

SEE COMMENT

In British politics, the *run-up* to election is the period of the campaign approaching the vote. The term can be used to cover the period of approach to any event, e.g. the *run-up* to the Prime Minister's speech on a certain topic, referring to the period of feverish preparation. *Run-up* is borrowed from cricket, where the **bowler** acquires momentum by *running up* to the point at which he releases the ball.

**rush, v.t.***Slang.* **soak**

*Slang.* For instance: *How much did they rush you for that sherry?* To *rush* is to *charge*, with the distinct implication that the price was too high.

**rush one's fences***Slang.* **jump the gun**

*Slang.* To go off half-cocked; to act or react with undue haste.

**rusticate, v.t.****expel temporarily from university**

To be *permanently expelled* is, in Britain, to be **sent down**. *Rustication* occurs in the case of less serious offenses.



**sack**, *n., v.t.*

1. *n.* dismissal
2. *v.t.* fire
3. *v.t.* expel

1. *Inf.* As in, *get or give the sack*.
2. *Inf.* From a job. See synonyms under **give (someone) his cards**.
3. *Inf.* From a secondary school. From a university, the term for *expel* is *send down*.

**safari bed.** See **camp bed**.

**safe storage**

**safekeeping**

**saffron bun**

SEE COMMENT

Also called *saffron cake*. A delicacy of Cornish origin, bright yellow in color. If you should happen to look into a 15th-century British cookbook (or *cokeryboke*, as they were called) you would find that virtually all cakes and many breads were heavily "strewn forth" with saffron.

**St. Luke's summer**

**Indian summer**

Also called *Luke's little summer* and *St. Martin's summer*.

**St. Martin's summer**

**Indian summer**

Also called *St. Luke's summer* and *Luke's little summer*.

**saithe.** See **Appendix II.H**.

... **salad**, *n.*

... **and salad**

*Chicken (ham, beef, etc.) salad* on British menus means *chicken* (etc.) *and salad*: not the chopped up variety familiar to Americans. In Britain you get a serving of chicken or other meat *and* a portion of salad.

**saloon**, *n.*

1. **sedan**

2. **parlor**

1. A *saloon motorcar*, which can be shortened to *saloon* in proper context, is what Americans call a *sedan*.

2. *Saloon* is commercialese in Britain, except on a ship (and see *saloon bar* and **saloon-car**). In the commercial idiom the British use the terms *hair-dressing*, *billiards*, etc., *saloon* where the American term would be *parlor*; but in ordinary speech, a man would simply refer to his barber, a woman to her hairdresser.

**saloon bar.** See **pub**.

**saloon-car**

**parlor car**

Also *saloon-carriage*, in a railroad car.

**salt beef**

No matter where served in all of Britain, scarcely resembling New York City's kosher corned beef. Once a diet staple of the British army in the field, its army nickname is *bully beef*. See also **corned beef**.

**salting, n.**

1. Usually found in the plural.
2. Land periodically flooded by ocean or inlet tides.

1. salt marsh
2. tide-flat

**sand, n.**

*Inf.* In the sense of *determination, courage, steadfastness of purpose*.

**grit**

**sandboy.** See **happy as a sandboy**.

**sanitation officer.** See under **refuse tip**.

**sap, n., v.i.**

1. *v.i., Slang.* **cram**
2. *n., Slang.* **grind**

1. *Slang.* To *sap* is to *cram*. See also **mug**; **swot**.

2. *Slang.* A *sap* is a *grind*, in the two distinct senses of 'zealous student' and 'tough job.' (The American slang meaning 'fool' is shared with Britain.)

One wonders whether this latter meaning reflects the anti-intellectual atmosphere that gave rise to the term *egghead*. *Verbum sap*, or as we usually say, *A word to the wise* is sufficient.

**sapper, n.****army engineer**

Especially a private, engaged in the building of fortifications in the field, etc.

**Sassenach, n., adj.**

SEE COMMENT

A derogatory term for English (man), from the Gaelic for *Saxon* noun and adjective.

**sauce, n.***Inf.* **cheek**

*Inf.* In the sense of 'impudence' or 'impertinence.' Often heard in the phrase *bloody sauce*.

**sauce-boat, n.****gravy boat****sausage, n.***approx.* **weatherstripping**

*Inf.* Sausage-shaped form, velvet stuffed with sawdust, used to keep out under-the-door drafts.

**sausage roll**

SEE COMMENT

1. Baked sausage meat in pastry. See also **pie**; **pasty**; **stargazey**.
2. *Inf.* Anything sausage-shaped, including people.

**save one's bacon, Slang.***Inf.* **save one's skin****save the mark!****God help us!**

Sometimes *God save the mark!* A sarcastic or scornful interjection. *He calls himself an impressionist—God save the mark!*

**savoury, n.**

A *canapé* or sometimes something larger served usually at the end of dinner, after dessert; but the term also covers an *hors d'oeuvre* or *appetizer*. Examples might be a sardine or anchovy on toast, a modest welsh rarebit, and so on. When served after dessert, it is always served hot.

**tidbit****say boo to a goose****Inf. open one's mouth**

*Inf. Have the courage to express disapproval. Usually in the negative: He wouldn't say boo to a goose, meaning 'He was afraid to open his mouth (to say a word).'* Describes a milquetoast.

**scarper, v.i., Slang.**

Escape, run away.

**Slang. scam****scatty, adj.**

*Slang. Americans are more apt to say scatterbrained or feeble-minded.*

**Slang. whacky****scene-shifter, n.****stagehand****scenic railway**

Child's railroad train in an amusement park or tourist attraction.

**miniature railway****scent, n.**

A *scent spray* is an *atomizer*.

**perfume****scheduled building****SEE COMMENT**

(Pronounced SCHEDULED.) Buildings earmarked by the British Government as Ancient Monuments, or buildings of special architectural or historical interest.

**scheme, n.****plan**

In Britain the noun does not always have the American connotation of 'slyness' or 'sharp practice' (in fact one may talk of government or private housing *schemes*), but the noun *schemer* and the verb to *scheme* do have that connotation.

**scheme of arrangement**

Of a corporation in financial difficulties.

**reorganization plan****schemozzle. See shemozzle.****scholar, n.****scholarship student**

Learned persons are called *scholars* in both countries, but the word is not used in America, as it commonly is in Britain, to denote a *student on a scholarship*. In the North of England the term applies to any schoolboy, as it can in America, and once did all over England.

**school, n.****SEE COMMENT**

An American may speak of Harvard as his *school*; no Briton would apply that term to his university. The word is confined in Britain to the grades below college level (*college* in the American sense; *university* in the British). For the distinction in Britain between *college* and *university*, see **college**.

**schoolboy cake**

*Inf.* Made with a minimum of fruit, and that consisting almost entirely of currants; the type commonly served at boarding-schools and sold at railroad stations, cheap cafés, etc. In earlier times, it was called *shouting cake*, and it is still so referred to jocularly by older folk: the currants were so far apart they had to shout at one another—unlike *whispering cake*, the ubiquitous fruit-laden British wedding cake, so richly laden that the components were close enough to whisper to one another.

**cheap fruit cake****school-leaver, n.***approx.* **high-school graduate**

A student who has completed formal education at a secondary school level, is not going on to college, and is now ready to go to work for a living. The shorter term **leaver** is occasionally used in **prep school** and **public school** circles to describe a student about to complete the curriculum there.

**school treat, n.****school party**

Usually away from school, on private grounds thrown open for the occasion.

**schooner, n.****large sherry (port) glass**

An American *schooner* is a *tall beer glass*. In Britain, where beer is usually drunk in very large glasses as a matter of course (see **pint**), a *schooner* is a glass reserved for a more than usually generous portion of sherry, or sometimes port.

**scoff, n., v.t.****1. n., Slang. good eats****2. v.t., Slang. wolf**

1. *n., Slang.* A schoolboy term.

2. *v.t., Inf.* To *gobble* or *knock back* food, especially sandwiches.

**sconce, n., v.t.***approx.* **fine**

*Slang.* A highly specialized Oxford term, applicable only to undergraduates dining in **hall** (i.e., in the college dining-room). To *sconce* a fellow student is to *fine* him a tankard of ale, or the like, for a breach of table etiquette. *Sconce*, as a noun, means the 'forfeit' so imposed. The table of offenses varies with the college.

**scone, n.***approx.* **baking powder biscuit**

(Should rhyme with JOHN though the long o is also heard in some circles. See **Appendix I.C.6.**) Usually served at room temperature, while the approximate American equivalent is served warm. The usual fare for *tea*.

**scoop the pool***Slang.* **make a killing**

*Slang.* Originally a stock exchange term.

**score off, v.****get the better of**

*Inf.* In an argument or in repartee.

**Scotch egg**

## SEE COMMENT

This is a pub delicacy consisting of a hard-boiled egg, coated with a blanket of pork sausage meat, which is then breaded and deep-fried.

**Scotch foursome.** See **fourball**.

**Scotch woodcock**

SEE COMMENT

*Scrambled eggs* (the British sometimes call them *buttered eggs*) on toast first spread with anchovy paste. The recipe for Scotch woodcock in *Mrs. Beeton's Household Management* follows:

*Scotch Woodcock (Anchois à l'Écossaise)*

*Ingredients.*—The yolks of two eggs, one gill of cream (or cream and milk in equal parts), anchovy paste, toast, butter, cayenne, salt.

*Method.*—Cut the toast into two-inch squares, butter well, and spread them with anchovy paste. Season the eggs with a little cayenne and salt; when slightly beaten add them to the hot cream, stir over the fire until they thicken sufficiently, then pour the preparation over the toast, and serve as hot as possible.

*Time.*—Ten minutes. Sufficient for six to eight persons.

**Scouse, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* (Rhymes with *MOUSE*.) Denotes a native of Liverpool and the Liverpool dialect. A native of Liverpool is also called a *Liverpudlian*.

**scout.** See *gyp*.

**scraggy, adj.****scrawny**

Lean and skinny.

**scray, n.****tern**

A seabird.

**scree, n.****mountain slope**

But *scree* (or *screes*) can also be used to denote the pebbles or small stones and rocks that dribble or slide down when people walk up a steep slope covered with loose gravel.

**screw, n.**1. approx. *Slang. take*2. *nag*3. approx. *twist; bit*

1. *Slang.* In the sense of 'salary.' It is hard to find an exact American slang equivalent. *Take* may do, but it is broader than *screw* because it would cover the concept of *profit* as well as that of *regular wages*.

2. *Slang.* An old and shaky horse.

3. *Slang.* It is occasionally used to mean a 'rumpled-up ball of paper'—the sort thrown into a wastebasket; at other times a 'bit of salt or tobacco,' or anything of that sort contained in a piece of twisted paper.

**screwed, adj.***Slang. tight*

*Slang. Loaded, pickled, stinko, etc.*

**scribbling-block, n.****scratch pad**

Also *scribbling-pad*.

**scrimmage.** See *scrum*.

**scrimshank, v.i.***Slang. goldbrick*

*Military slang.* To *shirk*. Originally a nautical slang expression alluding to the man who idly swung the lead he was supposed to be taking soundings with. Medical

humor: a doctor fed up with signing excuses so that lazy employees could attend soccer matches attested that a patient was suffering from *plumbum pendularum*, mock Latin for *lead swinging*. See also: **skive; dodge the column; swing the lead; swing it; skulk; slack; soldier; mike.**

**scrip, n.**

**temporary stock certificate**

In Britain a *scrip* is a *temporary certificate* issued to one entitled eventually to receive a formal stock certificate. In America *scrip* is applied to a formal certificate representing a fraction of a share. In the bad old days of U.S. company towns (mining towns were a prime example), one company would pay a *scrip* which could only be used in company-owned stores—now an illegal practice.

**scrotty, adj.**

**crummy**

Anything far from first quality can be said in England to be *scrotty*, thought of in American to be *cheesy*.

**scrubber, n.**

**loose woman**

*Slang.* A pejorative term for one who gives that impression.

**scruffy, adj.**

**untidy, shabby**

**scrum, n.**

**scrummage; melee**

*Inf.* Short for *scrummage*, which is a variant of *scrummage*. *Scrummage* has the general meaning of 'confused struggle' or 'melee' in both countries. In British Rugby football, the *scrummage* is the mass of all the forwards surrounding the ball, which has been thrown on the ground between them. As a sports term, the British usually use the shortened form *scrum*.

**scrummage.** See **scrum**.

**scrump, v.t., v.i.**

**steal fruit**

Also *scrimp, skrump*. Particularly apples. *Scrumpy* is a rough, usually very strong cider. The name implies that it has been made from all old apples lying around. See also **cider**.

**scrumpy.** See under **scrump**.

**scrutineer, n.**

**ballot counter and inspector**

**scug, n.**

**fink**

*School slang.* Extremely derogatory in the cruel way peculiar to children. It means a person with bad manners, unfriendly, a bad sport, and generally one to be shunned.

**scullery, n.**

**back kitchen**

Room for washing dishes etc.

**scunner.** See **take a scunner at**.

**scupper, v.t.**

*Slang.* **do (someone) in**

*Slang.* *Scupper* is a noun in both countries, meaning a 'drain in a ship' designed to carry water off a deck. As a British verb, *scupper* means 'ambush and wipe out.' In nautical circles, to *scupper* is to *sink a ship*, with the implication of finishing off the crew as well.

**scurf, n.**

Both terms used in both countries.

**dandruff****scutter, v.i., Inf.****scurry****scuttle, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A *scuttle* is a *coal pail*, usually called a *coal scuttle* in both countries. The word, however, has an exclusively British additional meaning: a 'wide shallow basket.'

**S.E. See Standard English.****sea, n.****beach**

*Sea* and *seaside* are used in Britain where Americans would usually say *beach*, or less commonly, *shore*, to mean a 'seaside resort,' like Brighton in Britain or Atlantic City in America. See **beach** for British use of the word. See also **front**; **bathe**.

**sea fret****sea fog**

Nautical jargon.

**sea front. See front.****season ticket****commutation ticket**

In America one thinks of a *season ticket* as something entitling one to see all the games at a given ball park. In Britain it usually refers to train travel and can be valid for anything from a month to a year. In this sense, it is occasionally shortened to *season*, as in railroad station signs reading PLEASE SHOW YOUR SEASON. A *season ticket holder* is a *commuter*. *Season ticket* can also apply to a series of performances, in which sense it would be synonymous with *subscription*.

**secateurs, n. pl.****pruning shears**

(Accent on the first syllable, which rhymes with DECK.) Such shears are operated with one hand.

**second, n.****magna**

A university term. *Second* is short for *second-class honours* just as *magna* in the U.S. is short for *magna cum laude*. In some universities a second-class degree is further divided into an *upper* or (informally) *good second* and a *lower second*. See also **first**; **class**.

**second, v.t.****transfer temporarily; detail**

Denotes a temporary transfer of an employee to another department of the company, or of a soldier to another unit.

**secondary modern. See eleven plus.****secondary subject****minor**

At college. In American colleges, students choose a *major* (in which they *specialize*) and usually a *minor*. In Britain, the student **reads** his main subject, and elects a *secondary subject*.

**second class. See first class.**

**second eleven**

*Inf.* Or *Grade B*—a term borrowed from **cricket**. See **eleven**.

**second rank****see (someone) far enough**

*Inf.* As in *I'll see him far enough before I invite him to dinner again*. Sometimes given as *to see one further*.

*Inf.* see **one in hell**

**see (someone) off**, *Slang*.

Nothing to do with fond good-byes.

*Slang.* **polish (someone) off**

**see (someone) out**

*Inf.* *This coat will see me out*, says the elderly person who feels guilty about an expenditure at a sale. *It'll outlive me*, he or she might have said.

**last for the rest of (someone) life**

**see the back of**

*Inf.* Almost always after *I'll be glad to . . .*

*Inf.* see **the last of**

**self-selection**, *n.*, *adj.*

Applying to retail stores.

**self-service****sell (someone) a dummy**

*Inf.* A term borrowed from rugby.

*Inf.* **put it over on (someone)**

**sell (someone) a pup**

*Inf.* To *sell someone a pup* is to *stick him*, i.e., to cheat him, especially by getting a high price for inferior merchandise.

*Slang.* **stick (someone)**

**Sellotape**, *n.*

Proprietary names. In Britain also given as *sellotape*.

**Scotch tape****sell the pass**

*Inf.* To cede the advantage to one's adversaries. Term borrowed from the language of mountain warfare.

**betray a cause or trust**

**sell up**

*Inf.* If a Briton were to sell his residence and also wanted to liquidate the furnishings he would speak of *selling up* everything, i.e., *selling out* lock, stock, and barrel. It means 'sell out' also in the sense of 'sell out a debtor's property' in a forced sale.

*Inf.* **sell out**

**semibreve**, *n.*

Musical term. See **Appendix II.F**.

**whole note****semi-detached**, *adj.*

In America a *two-family house* may be divided horizontally or vertically. In Britain a *semi-detached residence* is a one-family house joined to another by a common or party wall. The two halves are often painted different colors. When more than two residences are joined together, the series is called a *terrace*.

**two-family**

**semiquaver**, *n.*

Musical term. See **Appendix II.F**.

**sixteenth note****semolina**, *n.***milled durum wheat**

**S.E.N.**

Stands for *State Enrolled Nurse*. See also **sister**.

**practical nurse****send down**

A term from university life. In referring to school, the British slang term is *sack*. See also **rusticate**.

**expel****send (someone) spare**

*Slang*. See also **go spare**.

*Slang*. **drive (someone) nuts****send to Coventry**

*Inf.* To ignore socially; give the cold shoulder to. The primary factor of this punishment is that nobody is to speak to the poor chap.

*Inf.* **turn one's back on****send-up, n.**

*Inf.* Or *put-on*. A *send-up* of a music hall song in America would be a *take-off* on it. To *send* someone *up* is to *make fun* of him. Incidentally, in both countries one can be *sent up* (to jail or gaol).

*Inf.* **take-off****send up rotten**

*Slang*. To 'deprecate, to get bad reviews.'

**pan****senior lecturer**

Approximate equivalent in the teaching hierarchy. See **reader**.

**assistant professor****Senior Service**

*Senior Service* does not mean the Army.

**Royal Navy****Senior Wrangler**. See **wrangler**.**Senior Wrangler sauce**. See **brandy-butter**.**septillion**. See **Appendix II.D**.**sergeant-major**

See also **R.S.M.**

**top sergeant****serve, v.t., v.i.**

In a shop, to *serve* someone is to *wait on* a customer. *Are you being served?* (sometimes shortened to *Are you served?*) would usually come out as, *Is someone helping you?* in an American store.

**wait on****servery, n.**

Generally a room from which meals are served. Thus, at a pub one might find a sign pointing to the GARDEN AND BAR SERVERY, indicating the room to which one must go in order to obtain food and drink to be consumed in the garden or the bar.

*approx.* **service counter****service engineer**

An epithet applied to one experienced in refrigerators, dishwashers, etc.

**skilled mechanic**

**service flat, *n.***

In the plural, *service flats* is seen in the expression *block of service flats*, which would correspond to an American *apartment hotel* or *residential hotel*. See also **apartment; flat**.

**hotel apartment**

**service lift**

A **dumb-waiter** in Britain is also what is known in America and in Britain as a *lazy Susan*.

**dumbwaiter**

**service occupancy.** See under **vacant possession**.

**serviette, *n.***

Still used occasionally but *table-napkin* is widely used.

**napkin**

**servitor.** See **sizar**.

**set, *n.***

1. *approx. group*
2. **apartment; suite**
3. **paving block**
4. **badger's burrow**

1. A school term; thus the *A set*, the *B set*, etc., meaning 'group' (within a given grade or form) based on the ability of the students. In this sense, the word is giving way to a newer term, **stream**.

2. In this use, restricted to apartments in such exclusive and historic addresses as the residence known as *Albany* in London, with its sixty-nine *sets*, or to groups of rooms at the various **Inns of Court**, where *sets* is short for *sets of chambers*. See **chambers**.

3. Variant of *sett*.

4. Variant of *sett*, which can also mean badger's debris outside the burrow.

**set about**

*Slang.* An expression that one gang member would be apt to use to encourage his mates when about to take on a rival gang. *Let's set about that lot!*

**Slang. lay into**

**set book, *n.***

Specific reading assignment for an examination.

**required reading**

**set down**

A term used in transportation: passengers are *set down* in Britain and *let off* or *dropped off* in America. Signs seen in Britain: At a railroad station: PICK UP AND SET DOWN. NO PARKING. At bus stops: SETTING DOWN POINT ONLY (interchangeable with ALIGHTING POINT).

**let off**

**set fair**

Stable term: to *set a horse fair* is to *put it up*, i.e., *get it all set* for the night.

**put up**

**set lunch**

See also **set tea**.

**table d'hôte; prix fixe**

**set out one's stall, *Inf.***

**display one's credentials**

**sett.** See **set**, 3. and 4.

**set tea**

Tea with little sandwiches and cakes, obtainable at hotels and restaurants; a complete tea at a fixed price. See also **tea**.

**afternoon tea****set the Thames on fire***Inf.* **set the world on fire**

'He will never set the Thames on fire' is said about a person who shows no sign of great achievement in his life.

**sexillion, sextillion.** See **Appendix II.D.**

**shadow, adj.**

## SEE COMMENT

In British political life, a *shadow cabinet* or *government* is a group of leaders of the party out of power who would be appointed to replace the current group if the outs became the ins.

**shag****fuck**

*Slang.* This vulgar Britishism and its American counterpart can be thought of as the verb to engage in sexual intercourse. But as in American explicit vulgarisms, phrases borrowed from Latin seem to represent the dignifying of an act that is better expressed in the language of the barnyard.

**shake.** See **in two shakes of a duck's tail.**

**shake down***Inf.* **put up (for the night)**

*Slang.* In Britain it is very hospitable of you to *shake somebody down*, especially if that person lacks a place to sleep. In America, apart from its slang meaning of 'extortion,' a *shake-down* is an *improvised bed*. This use is reflected in the British use of *shake down*. None of this, of course, has anything to do with a *shakedown cruise*, which is a phrase used in both countries meaning a 'new ship's initial trip' made in order to break in both engine and crew.

**Shakespearean university.** See under **Oxbridge.**

**shambolic, adj.****chaotic**

*Inf.* From *shambles*. Used occasionally to describe situations or places that are in a state of extreme disorder.

**shammy.** See **wash leather.**

**shandrydan, n.****rickety vehicle**

Originally a chaise or shay, a light open two-wheeled horse-drawn carriage for two, usually with a hood; later applied to any ancient dilapidated vehicle. This term is hardly ever met with these days.

**shandy, n.**

## SEE COMMENT

A drink consisting of beer and lemonade or ginger beer in equal parts, which some British children drink in their early teens in preparation for the eventual **pint**. Short for *shandygaff*.

**shape, n.**

## SEE COMMENT

An old-fashioned word for any dessert like jello, blancmange, mousse, etc. shaped in a mold.

**shared line**

The more fortunate have **exclusive lines**. Also called *shared service*.

**party line****share-pushing**

Not necessarily fraudulent but with the implication of sharp practice.

**stock touting****share raid**. See **raid**.**shares, n. pl.**

Usual name for corporate equities. *Stock*, or *stocks*, in British financial circles, usually means 'government bonds,' but can mean 'corporate stock' as well, as in America; and *stockholder* can refer to either type of security. *Tap stocks* are those that are always available. The term is applied also to government bonds sold by the government departments holding them when they reach a certain market price. They may be short-term or long-term. *Taplets* are small issues of this kind.

**stocks****sharpen, v.t.**

Musical term, make or become *sharp*. See **Appendix I.A.3**.

**sharp****shave hook**

Used to prepare metal for soldering.

**scraper****shaw, n.**

1. Mainly poetic.

2. Mainly Scottish, and referring particularly to turnip and potato crops.

**1. thicket****2. stalks and leaves****sheaf, n.**

*Inf.* Referring to paper money: *sheaf of notes* would be a *bankroll* or a *wad* in America. *Sheaf* is usually used for a tied-up armful of wheat.

*Inf.* **wad; bankroll****shebeen, n.**

(Accent on the second syllable.) An unlicensed pub in Ireland. See **licensed**.

*approx.* **speakeasy****shelf company**

A corporation formed by a lawyer (**solicitor**) or an accountant, held available for the use of a client needing to organize a company.

## SEE COMMENT

**sheltered trade**

Describing a business that gets no competition from abroad, for example, a railroad.

**domestic monopoly****shemozzle, n.**

*Slang.* A *mix-up*, a *mess*, a *confused situation* generally; in a narrower use, a *row*, in the sense of 'dispute,' a *rhubarb*, a *melee*. The British spell this word variously; a sampling of variants: *schemozzle*, *shemozzl*, *shimozzel*, *chimozzle*, *shlemozzl*, *shlemozzle*, *schlemozzle*, *schlemazel*. Its origin is in London racetrack cant. The first *l*, and certainly the spelling *schlemazel*, crept in out of confusion with the totally unrelated Yiddish term *schlemaz(e)l*, meaning 'hard-luck guy.'

*Inf.* **mix-up; row**

**shepherd's pie***approx. hash*

Not quite: a *shepherd's pie* is usually made of chopped meat or the remains of a roast, ground up (**minced**), topped by a layer of mashed potatoes and baked in the oven.

**sherbet.** See under **ice**.

**shilling.** See **Appendix II.A**.

**shilling shocker****dime novel**

Also known in Britain as a **penny dreadful** or a **penny blood**. All of these terms are old fashioned.

**shingle, n.****beach pebbles**

A beach so covered would be known as a *shingle beach* (as opposed to a *sandy beach*). In America it would be called a *pebble beach* or *pebbly beach*.

**shipping order****large order**

*Inf.* One of those interminable orders being given by the customer just ahead of you.

**shipshape and Bristol fashion.** See **Bristol fashion**.

**shire, n.**

SEE COMMENT

(Pronounced **SHER**, sometimes **SHEER**, when used as a suffix.) Old word for *county*, now rarely used except in the plural (the *Shires*) meaning the 'hunting country.' It is found mainly as a suffix in the names of most of the counties, as, for example, in *Hampshire, Yorkshire*.

**shirty, adj., Slang.****vexed****shoal, n.***Inf.* **crowd**

*Inf.* A *multitude*, like a *shoal* (or *shoals*) of *correspondence* to attend to.

**shock, n.****sensation**

*Inf.* Common usage in journalism, especially on the daily posters at newsstands purporting to inform the public what today's big story is, but really only acting as a teaser. Thus: **SHARES DROP SHOCK** (Stock Market Collapse Sensation!); **OLD BAILEY CONFESSION SHOCK** (Murder Trial Confession—Wow!); **BUDGET SHOCK** (Terrible New Tax Bill!), etc. A *shock result* in sports is an *upset*.

**shocker, n.****1. Inf. stinker****2. cheap novel**

**1. *Inf.*** *Shocker* is used to describe a bad case of almost anything; a stretch of wretched weather, a new tax, an embarrassing utterance by a public figure, a dress in very bad taste, overcooked Brussels sprouts, boring dinner party. Sometimes it is used in a rather exaggerated way, as in: *Isn't letter-writing a shocker!* See also **shocking**.

**2.** Short for **shilling shocker**. It can also mean a 'sensational novel' as opposed to a *thriller*.

**shocking, adj.***Inf.* **awful**

*Inf.* As in *Isn't it shocking?* (about the weather, etc.). *Shocking* is used in much the same way as **shocker, 1**.

**shoe mender**  
See also **mend**.

**shoemaker**

**shoot, v.t.**

**hunt**

A Briton *hunts* foxes and deer but *shoots* game birds and rabbits. Americans *hunt* quail, for instance. To *let the shooting* is to lease the right to hunt birds on your property.

**shoot, n.**

1. shooting party
2. shooting expedition
3. shooting practice
4. shooting area

**shoot a robin**

*Inf.* **run into a streak of bad luck**

*Slang.* He must have shot a robin would be said of one suffering the lot of Job: one piece of bad luck after another. The Ancient Mariner was concerned with the albatross; a robin suffices in this quaint British expression. It's much worse than spilling salt, walking under a ladder, being crossed by a black cat; more like breaking a mirror.

**shooting!, interj.**

*Inf.* **good shot!**

*Inf.* A complimentary observation in certain sports like tennis, basketball, etc.

**shooting-box, n.**

**hunting-lodge**

**shoot the cat**

*Slang.* **toss one's cookies**

*Slang.* To *throw up*; the common expression is **be sick**. See also **sick up**; **queer**.

**shoot the crow**

*Inf.* **decamp**

*Slang.* Normally used to describe the sudden departure of someone else, rather than oneself. *Where's Jones these days? Shot the crow, it looks like.* See also **shoot the moon**.

**shoot the moon**

*Slang.* **skip town by night**

*Slang.* See also **moonlight flit**; **shoot the crow**; **hook it**; **leave in the lurch**.

**shop, n.**

**store**

A matter of usage. *Shop* is used in a few British informal expressions that one does not hear in America. *You have come to the wrong shop*, means 'I can't help you' (because you are applying to the wrong person). To *sink the shop* is to *keep mum* generally and more specifically to *keep your activities under wraps*. *All over the shop* means 'in wild disorder.' *A nation of shopkeepers* refers to Britain itself. *Shop-soiled* is *shop-worn* in America. To *have everything in the shop window* is to *play the big shot*, without having anything to back it up.

**shop, v.t.**

1. jail
2. squeal on

*Slang.* In the British underworld to be *shopped* is to go to jail, and by extension to be *squealed on* by your accomplice so that you wind up in jail (spelled *gaol* in Britain, but pronounced like *jail*).

**shop assistant.** See **assistant**; **clerk**, 4.

**shopping-bag**, *n.*

*Inf.* **pack**; **bunch**; **bagful**

*Slang.* A whole bunch of something; a *miscellany*. The subject-matter itself may be omitted if the context is clear. 'She arrived with a shopping-bag,' says a doctor, meaning that the troublesome patient barged in with a plethora of ailments, a bagful of ills, all kinds of complaints.

**shop-walker**, *n.*

**floorwalker**

Attendant in a department who directs customers to merchandise of interest to them.

**short**, *n.*

**straight drink**

*Inf.* A modest serving of hard liquor, sherry, vermouth, etc., as opposed to a mixed drink (e.g., gin and tonic) or beer. This is pub terminology. Note that *straight*, in this context, is **neat** in Britain, and *hard liquor* is **spirits**. See also **double**.

**short back and sides**

**close haircut**

Not a crew cut (which is called a **close crop** in Britain); rather, the normal British gentleman's style until World War II, and still, more or less, the Army private's, although that is changing in many parts of the world.

**short commons**

**short rations**

Originally a university term denoting the daily fare supplied to students at a fixed charge. The phrase has become somewhat pejorative with the connotation of *subsistence living*, *meager pickings*, so that the person said to be *on short commons* might also be described as *on his uppers*.

**shorthand typist**

**stenographer**

This term is now somewhat old-fashioned and is being supplanted by *secretary* even if the person involved is not properly speaking a *secretary* but only a *stenographer*. This is an example of the British tendency to pay honor to the dignity of labor—a trend very much in favor at the moment, which explains *shop assistant* for *salesperson*, *automotive engineer* for *garage mechanic*, etc. See also **P.A.**

**shorthand writer**

**court stenographer**

**shorts**, *n. pl.*

**(outdoor) shorts**

*Shorts*, in Britain, are not underwear. In America the word can refer to either underwear or outdoor apparel, depending on the context. The British term for *underwear shorts* is **pants**, sometimes *underpants*, though the *under* would seem to be superfluous because the word *pants* alone implies that. *Pants*, in the American sense of 'outdoor wear,' are *trousers* in Britain.

**short-sighted.** See under **long-sighted**.

**short time**

**part time**

As in, *Many workers are on short time . . .*, i.e., are still employed, but not full time. Does not apply to a regular part-time worker.

**shot, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Slang.* Measure of upper cylinder lubricant. Thus, as you drive up to a gas pump (**petrol station**) in Britain, you may ask for *two and two shots*, meaning 'two gallons of gas and two shots of lubricant' which is mixed into the gas.

**shot about***Slang.* **beat**

*Slang.* In the sense of *exhausted*; *knocked out*.

**shot of****rid of**

*Inf.* Said to be a cockney version of *shut of*, but the variant appears to be in more general use than the original. *Shut of* would seem to be used when referring to a person who is a nuisance to be got rid of, while *shot of* can refer to persons or things one would rather do without. *Shed of* would appear to be an Americanism derived from *shut of*.

**shout, n., v.i.****treat**

As a noun, one's *turn* to buy the drinks. *It's my shout this time* means. 'This one's on me.' As a verb, to *shout* is to *stand drinks*. Heard mainly down under.

**shouting cake.** See **schoolboy cake**.

**shove-halfpenny**

SEE COMMENT

Common pub game. Played by shoving well-polished old halfpennies (pronounced HAY' PNEEZ) or token disks with the flat of the hand along a board separated into horizontal sections having numerical values. Possibly the most frustrating game in the world.

**show, n.****1. chance****2. affair**

1. *Inf.* To say of someone that he had no *show* at all is to say that he had no *opportunity* of proving or defending himself. One might plead, *At least give him a fair show!*

2. *Inf.* Speaking of his new, up-and-coming partner, the older man might say, *Jones is doing well, but it's still my show*, i.e., *I'm still in charge around here*. See also **bad show!**; **good show!**

**show a leg***Inf.* **rise and shine**

*Slang.* Term used in the Royal Navy to rouse the sleeping sailor.

**shower, n.***Slang.* **washout**

*Slang.* When someone is referred to as a *shower*, or a *perfect shower*, he is a *total loss*, a *washout*. See also **wet**.

**show friendly to (someone)****act in a friendly manner towards (someone)**

Make a friendly gesture towards (someone). But see **friendly action**.

**show-house, n.****model home**

And *show-flat* is *model apartment*.

**showing favour**

SEE COMMENT

A term used in criminal law to describe the offense of giving aid and comfort to the criminal element, applied especially to police officers who accept bribes for helping them in their unlawful pursuits, e.g., by tipping them off about impending police raids.

**show one's colours, *Inf.***

**stand up and be counted; reveal one's character or party**

**shrewd, *adj.***

**1. sharp; biting**

**2. severe; hard**

1. Describing a wind, cold weather, pain, etc. A literary use; archaic in common speech.

2. Applying to a blow or a thrust. These meanings are in addition to the shared meaning of 'astute' or 'wise'.

**shrimp.** See under **prawn.**

**shuffy, *n.***

*Slang.* **gander; look-see**

*Slang.* (The *u* is pronounced like the *oo* in *BOOK*.) This word, of Arabic origin, with its variant *shufti*, is often used as a verb in the imperative: *Shuffy!* meaning, 'Look!' Originally military stuff, but soldiers often take their special slang with them when they reenter civilian life, and it passes into general speech. See also *recce*.

**shunting yard**

**switchyard**

**sick, *adv.***

**sick to one's stomach**

When a Briton says *sick* he means 'queasy,' not sick all over or sick generally. If that were the case he'd say *ill*. To *be sick* means to 'throw up.' See also **sick up; queer**. However, he uses *sick* in compounds with *bed*, *benefit*, *call*, *leave*, *list*, *pay*, *room*, etc. *Sickmaking* (see **-making**) is slang for *sickening*, *disgusting*. See also *ill*.

**sick as a cat**

**sick as a dog**

**sickener, *n.***

*Slang.* **bellyful**

*Slang.* After a long unpleasant experience: *I have had a sickener of that!*

**sicker, *n.***

**sick bay**

*Schoolboy slang.* *Infirmary*. Very old, and not much heard any more.

**sick up**

**throw up**

*Inf.* A vulgar expression for *vomit*. The usual expression is *be sick*; *throw up* is hardly used. See also **sick; queer**.

**side, *n.***

**1. team**

**2. airs**

**3. English**

1. To *let the side down* is to *be found wanting* at the crucial moment, in the clutch, so as to frustrate the good work of one's colleagues. The term originated in sports, but can be applied to any situation.

2. *Inf.* To *put on side* is to *put on airs*, *put on the dog*.

3. A billiards term, synonymous with **spin**. In this usage, to *put on side* means to *put English* on the ball. This appears to be the earlier meaning of *put on side* and there are those who believe that meaning 2. evolved from meaning 3.

**sideboards, *n. pl.***

**sideburns**

*Inf.* The British say *sideburns*, too.

**sidesman, n.**

Especially, one who passes the collection plate.

**deputy churchwarden****signal-box, n.****switch tower****sign off**

In the sense of initialing a document signifying having read and disposed of it.

**initial****sign-posted, adj.**

SEE COMMENT

Applied to road directions, meaning that the route is clearly marked by road signs at all intersections where one must turn. "Not to worry, it's all sign-posted" is reassuring.

**sign the poisons book**

SEE COMMENT

When you buy certain medicines in Britain, the druggist (**chemist** or **dispenser**) has you *sign the poisons book* where appropriate. This is a handy arrangement, presumably, in connection with autopsies and other situations. In America, a comparable record is maintained by the druggist himself.

**silk, take.** See **take silk**.**silverside, n.**

Butcher's term.

**top round****Silver Streak, Inf.****English Channel****simnel cake**

SEE COMMENT

This is a fancy ornamental cake with a thick layer of marzipan and various kinds of decorations, served at Easter.

**simple, adj.****Inf. not all there**

*Inf.* A term meaning something between 'silly' and downright 'feeble-minded.' *Simpleton* and *simple-minded* are related; but *simple* used by itself means something a little stronger. One thus afflicted might be said in both countries to *have a screw loose, rocks in his head, bats in his belfry*, or to be *without the benefit of certain of his marbles*.

**single, n.**See also **return** which is a *round-trip ticket*.**one-way ticket****single cream.** See under **double, 4**.**single cuff/double cuff**

Said of men's shirts and their sleeves.

**barrel cuff/French cuff****singlet, n.***Singlet* is being replaced by *T-shirt*, and the common word for *undershirt* is *vest*.**undershirt; T-shirt****single-track, adj.**

Road term.

**one-lane****sink, n.**A *sink*, in Britain, is a *kitchen sink*, not a bathroom sink, which is called a **basin**.**kitchen sink**

**sink differences**, *Inf.*

*Inf.* **bury the hatchet**

**sink the shop**. See under **shop**.

**sippet**, *n.*

**crouton**

**sirloin**, *n.*

**porterhouse**

What Americans call a *sirloin* the British call a *rump steak*. Incidentally, two sirloins in one roast are called a *baron of beef*, a *baron* being much bigger than a simple *Sir*.

**sister**, *n.*

**nurse**

The term *sister* is not applied to nurses in America except to nuns who nurse in Catholic hospitals. Until a recent attempt at reorganizing the terminology, a *sister* was the head nurse of a ward and there were *day sisters* and *night sisters*. *Theatre sisters* (the theatre in question being an *operating-theatre*), were those who handed scalpels and things to surgeons. The head nurse of a hospital was called *matron*. Except in the context of medical practice, *nurse*, in Britain, would connote *children's nurse* (whence *nursery*) rather than *hospital nurse*. See also **theatre**; **casualty ward**; **health visitor**.

**sister company**

SEE COMMENT

One of a number of subsidiaries of a parent company, in relation to the other subsidiaries. See **company**.

**sit an examination**

**take an examination**

Also **sit for an examination**.

**sit down under**

*Inf.* **stand for**

*Inf.* To *put up with*. What the British won't *sit down under*, the Americans won't *stand for*. The British use *stand for* as well.

**site**, *v.t.*

**locate**

Large-scale industry is *sited* in the Midlands. Americans would have said *located* or *situated*.

**sitrep**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

*Report on current situation*; a military abbreviation.

**sitter-in**, *n.*

**baby-sitter**

For a child, not for a baby. Americans don't distinguish; they're all called *baby-sitters*. *Babysitter*, in Britain, refers to one who takes care of a baby, not a child. See also **child-minder**.

**sitting**, *n.*

*approx.* **serving**

Some London restaurants have several *sittings* a night; that is why it's so important to **book** (reserve) in advance. Nobody rings up a restaurant and asks for this or that *sitting* (which is simply a restaurateur's term) as one used to on large ships.

**sitting, adj.**

In discussing American presidential elections, British television commentators and newspaper columnists invariably refer to the 'sitting president.' Americans call the president the *incumbent*, using the adjective as a substantive to describe the one in office.

**incumbent****sitting-room, n.**

*Sitting-room* sounds old-fashioned in America. *Living-room* is coming into use as a synonym for **sitting-room**. See also **lounge**; **reception-room**; **drawing-room**.

**living-room****sitting tenant**

A tenant *in situ*, who is legally entitled to remain so despite the expiration of his or her lease.

**statutory tenant****situations vacant**

Advertisement page heading. Synonymous with **vacancies**.

**help wanted****six, n.**

In cricket, a fly ball that lands beyond the **boundary** (the white line marking the outer limits of the playing field, or **ground**) scores six runs, as compared with a *boundary*, which scores only four. A *six* is the supreme achievement of a batsman, and rarely happens. It is far rarer than a home run in baseball. To *hit* (sometimes *knock*) a person *for six* is to *knock him for a loop*, *knock the daylights out of him*, in the sense of demolishing an opponent in an argument. One can *hit something* (as well as *someone*) *for six*: a weak argument from an adversary, for example. See also **batsman**; **cricket**.

SEE COMMENT

**sixpence, n.**

See **Appendix II.A**.

**sixth form**

The normal curriculum at a secondary school (usually ages 13–18) consists of five **forms** (*grades*). A minority of pupils go into a higher form, called the *sixth form*, to prepare for university. This does not always involve an extra year: gifted students may go directly from the fourth to the sixth. A pupil in this form is called a *sixth-former*. See also **A-levels**.

SEE COMMENT

**sizar, n.**

Student at Cambridge, and at Trinity College, Dublin, on part or full scholarship. Originally, a *sizar* had to perform certain duties for other students that are now taken care of by paid employees of the College. *Servitor*, now obsolete, was the approximate equivalent at some Oxford colleges. See also **bursar**.

SEE COMMENT

**skew-whiff, adj., adv., Inf.****crooked(ly); askew****skier.** See **sky ball**.**skilly, n.**

Broth made of oatmeal and water, usually flavored with meat. A very thin type of gruel. Also known as *skilligalee*, and *skilligolee*, accented on the final syllable.

SEE COMMENT

**skimble-scamble, skimble-skamble, *adj.*** **confused, rambling, incoherent**  
 This lively adjective might describe a narration of a frightening experience, or an attempt to explain something beyond the speaker's power of comprehension.

**skin, *n.*** **cigarette paper**  
*Slang.* See also **roll-up**.

**skinful, *n.*** ***Slang.* load on**  
*Slang.* An awful lot to drink. To *have got a skinful* or *one's skinful* is to *be stinkin' drunk*.

**skinhead, *n.*** ***approx. Inf.* young tough**  
*Slang.* A special breed of hoodlum characterized by very closely cropped hair. See also **rough**.

**skint, *adj., Slang.*** ***Slang.* dead broke**

**skip, *n.*** **1. refuse container**  
**2. college servant**  
 1. Large refuse container used by building contractors at the site. Cf. **skivvy-bin**.  
 2. See **gyp**.

**skipper** **captain**  
*Inf.* Of a cricket **side**.

**skipping-rope, *n.*** **jump rope**  
 And to *skip* is to *jump rope*. See **Appendix I.A.3**.

**skirt, *n.*** **flank**  
 Butcher's term; a *skirt* of beef.

**skirting, skirting-board, *n.*** **baseboard**

**skive, *v.i.*** ***Slang.* goldbrick**  
*Slang.* Military slang, synonymous with **scrimshank** and **dodge the column**; to *goof off*, *shirk*, *get out of working*. A *skiver* is a practitioner of this type of evasion. See also **swing it**; **swing the lead**.

**skivvy, *n., v.i.*** **SEE COMMENT**  
*Inf.* A term of derogation for a female domestic doing menial work. No American slang equivalent.

**skivvy-bin, *n.*** **dumpster; public rubbish receptacle**  
*Inf.* About ten ton capacity; strategically placed by local authorities for dumping refuse that the regular **dustman** won't take away.

**skulk, *v.i.*** **shirk**  
 As an intransitive verb *skulk* means to 'hide' or 'slink about' in both countries. A third meaning, to 'shirk,' is exclusively British.

**sky ball** ***approx.* pop fly**  
 A cricket term, often written *skier* (pronounced SKY'ER).

**slack**, *v.i.*, *Slang*.

*Slang*. **goof off**

**slag**, *v.t.*

**criticize**

*Slang*. Or *mock*, or *deride*. To *slag* someone *down* is to give him hell, let him have it. Heard, but not commonly.

**slang**, *v.t.*

**abuse; revile**

*Inf*. A *slanging-match* is an *altercation*, a *helluva row*, in which everybody washes everybody else's dirty linen but nobody's gets clean.

**slang, back**. See **back slang**.

**slant-tailed**, *adj.*

**fastback**

Automotive term. See also **Appendix II.E**.

**slap**, *adv.*

*Inf*. **right**

*Inf*. Examples: *slap through* is *right through*; *slap into* is *right into*. To walk *slap* into someone is to *bump* into him.

**slap-down**, *adv.*

*Inf*. **one hundred percent**

*Inf*. As in: *I am slap-down on his side*, referring to a disagreement between two persons. An American would be likely to say: *I am one hundred percent with (or against) him*.

**slap-up**, *adj.*

*Inf*. **bang-up**

*Inf*. *First rate*, *great*, *terrific*, *up to date*. The British once used both *slap-up* and *bang-up* commonly; both would be considered old-fashioned now. A *slap-up do* meant a 'bang-up job,' a first-rate piece of work, and especially a splendid party with no expense spared.

**slash**, *n.*, *v.i.*, *Vulgar*.

**(to) piss**

**slate, on the**. See **on the slate**.

**slate**, *v.t.*

*Inf*. **pan**

*Inf*. To express a harsh criticism. Thus: *The reviewers slated the book unmercifully*. Synonymous with **send up rotten**. But when a Lancashire girl says *I am slated*, she means her petticoat is showing. Slate roofs are common in that county; the slabs are affixed in layers, like shingles, and sometimes a slab hangs over the edge when it is not supposed to. Another quaint expression on the subject of slips showing is "Charley's dead!" which, when said to a woman, means 'Your slip is showing.'

**slate club**

**lodge**

In the sense of 'mutual aid society.' The members pay modest weekly dues, called **subscriptions** in Britain.

**slavey**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

*Slang*. A *maid of all work*. Usually connotes one employed to do more work than one should. No American slang equivalent.

**sledge, n., v.t.**

Children go *sledging* in Britain, but *sledding*, or more commonly *coasting*, in America, where a *sledge* is a heavy vehicle used in pulling loads, usually over snow or ice.

**sled****sleep in**

Not used in the American sense of domestic servants who live with the family they work for.

**sleep late****sleeping partner****silent partner****sleeping policeman.** See **ramp**; **rumble strip**.**sleep rough**

*Inf.* Out of doors, the way the youngsters do it for fun on the road, and the homeless do it because they're homeless.

**sleep in the open****sleepy, adj.**

Of fruit, especially pears.

**overripe****sleepy sickness**

*Encephalitis lethargica* in both countries.

**sleeping sickness****sleeve link, n.****cuff link****slice, n.**

A term used in connection with British taxation. The rates go up as the *slices* go up. American rates follow a similar type of pattern, but the *slices* are known as *brackets*. Synonyms are **band** and **tranche** (the latter borrowed from the French).

**bracket****slide, n., v.i.**

Used of stock exchange prices when the news is bad.

**fall; drop****sliding keel**

The British use *sliding keel* to refer to a hinged centerboard, and *centreboard* and *centreplate* for the kind that pull up vertically without pivots. Both countries used *daggerplate* for small *centerboards* that can be pulled up and out and stored when not in use.

**centerboard****slim, v.i.**

As in, *I mustn't have any butter on my toast; I'm slimming*. An American would say: *I am dieting*, or more commonly, *I am on a diet*. See also **bant**.

**diet****slime, v.i., Slang.***Inf.* **get away with it****slinger, n.**

*Army slang*. Can also mean *dumpling*. A more common slang term for an English sausage is **banger**.

**sausage****slip, n.**

Theater term. There are *upper slips* and *lower slips* (depending on which gallery), too near the side walls to afford satisfactory vision.

**extreme side seat**

**slip-on shoes**

**loafers**

**slipover**, *n.*

**sleeveless sweater**

**slipper bath**

SEE COMMENT

A bathtub in the shape of a slipper, with one covered end. Did they ever exist in America? Just about obsolete in Britain.

**slippy**. See **look slippy!**

**slip road**

**access road**

The road by which one enters or leaves a parkway or turnpike.

**slip seat**

**jump seat**

**Sloane Rangers**

SEE COMMENT

The sardonic name given young upper class or upper-middle class persons who are well-spoken, well-mannered, and well-dressed. Living in the vicinity of Sloane Square, they dress expensively and conservatively (silk scarves tied under their chins), work as well paid personal secretaries and spend weekends in the country hunting. They have, most of them, **double-barrelled** names. Not quite the old **Mayfair**, as the particular panache is lacking, but as close as one can get in these times.

**slop**, *n.*

**cop**

*Slang.* *Slop* developed as a shortened form of *ecilop*, which is *police* spelled backwards. This is an example of **back slang**. For synonyms see **bobby**.

**slope off**, *Slang.*

*Inf.* **sneak off**

**slop out**

SEE COMMENT

*Slang.* To *slop out* is to carry out one's chamber pot, slops-pail, or whatever vessel is provided in unsanitary, overcrowded prisons for the inmates. This is a hateful practice imposed on prisoners in antiquated quarters lacking proper toilet facilities, much protested by the inmates.

**slops**, *n. pl., Slang.*

**1. sailors' clothes and bedding**

**2. sloppy clothes**

1. Issued by the navy.
2. Ready-made, and uncared for.

**slosh**, *v.t.*

**smack**

*Inf.* In the sense of 'hit.'

**sloshed**, *adj.*

*Slang.* **smashed**

*Slang.* *Tipsy, tight, squiffed*, i.e., *intoxicated*. See also **have one over the eight; skinful; squiffy; pissed**.

**slot machine**

**vending machine**

Not for gambling. A distinction worth remembering, as the British phrase may well raise unfounded hopes in an American's breast. See also **fruit machine**, and expressions derived from *slot machine*: **penny in the slot; (the) penny dropped**.

**slowcoach** *n., Inf.*

*Inf.* **slowpoke**

**slow off the mark,**

*Inf.* See also **off the mark.**

*Inf.* **slow on the uptake**

**slow train**

**local**

And **fast train** is the term for *express*. See also **stopping train.**

**slut's wool**

**dust balls**

*Inf.* The stuff that collects under the bed, behind the bureau, and other hard-to-reach places.

**sly fox.** See **Tom Tiddler's ground.**

**smacker, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Slang.* Pound (currency). *Smacker* is also old-fashioned American slang for *dollar*, in this sense competing with *simoleon*, *bone*, and *buck*. Also meaning a loud kiss in Britain as well as in America.

**small ad**

**classified ad**

**small beer**

*Inf.* **small-time**

*Inf.* Matters or persons of little importance are *small beer*.

**small hours**

**wee hours**

Anytime from 1 a.m. to 3 a.m. Surely you and I are not up at those hours. Or are we missing something?

**smalls, n. pl.**

1. *Inf.* **undies**

2. SEE COMMENT

1. *Inf.* Even on fat ladies and gentlemen.

2. *Smalls* was the informal term for **responsions**, once an Oxford examination procedure, now abolished.

**smarmy, adj.**

*Slang.* **oily**

*Slang.* In the sense of 'toadying,' or fulsomely flattering.

**smartish, adv.**

*Slang.* **on the double**

*Slang.* Tell the doctor to get here *smartish*! To walk *smartish* or *smartly* is to be going at a rapid pace. For a different and more common use of -ish, see **-ish**.

**smash, n.**

*Slang.* **smashup**

*Slang.* Traffic accident.

**smashing, adj.**

*Inf.* **terrific**

*Inf.* And a *smasher*, meaning 'something terrific,' usually refers to a girl, sometimes to a car. Adopted in America.

**smooth in**

**get settled**

*Inf.* "I haven't smoothed in yet"—said by a man in a village antique shop when asked where the nearest **post-box** was. He'd been in the village only a week or so and hadn't settled in yet, found his way about, got to know the place, etc.

**snag, n.***Inf.* **trouble; catch**

*Inf.* When a Briton wants to explain what is holding something up, he very often starts the sentence with the phrase, *The sang is . . .* Americans tell you what the *catch is*, or the *hitch*, or the *problem*, or the *trouble*.

**snapper, n.****snap**

*Fastener* used in dressmaking. An American *snapper*, the kind served at children's parties, is called a **cracker** in Britain. See also **popper**.

**snap-tin, n., Inf.****sandwich box****snick, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* A cricket term for a ball not hit squarely but caught by the edge of the bat. See also **cricket; batsman**.

**snicket, n.****alley**

Synonymous with **twitten**.

**sniggle v.i.****fish for small eels**

Term used in both countries.

**snip, n.****1. a bargain****2. Inf. sure thing****3. Inf. cinch****4. Inf. steal**

1. *Inf.* An advantageous purchase.

2. *Inf.* In the sense of a 'cinch,' a 'certainty.' This usage originated in racing slang; sometimes *dead snip*.

3. *Inf.* In the sense of 'anything easily done.'

4. *Inf.* In the sense of 'bargain.'

**snob, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Slang.* A *shoemaker* or *cobbler*, for which there appears to be no slang American equivalent. This usage is pretty well confined to oldtimers in the countryside.

**snog, v.i., Slang.****neck**

Kiss and caress, that is.

**snookered, adj.***Slang.* **up the creek; in a tight spot.**

*Slang.* (The *oo* is long, as in *roof*.) The British borrow their adjective describing this unhappy condition from the game of *snooker*, a variety of pocket billiards.

**snorter, n.****1. Slang. humdinger****2. punch in the nose**

1. *Slang.* Anything outstanding.

2. *Slang.* But it can be used metaphorically, as in *I wrote him a snorter* (i.e., an angry letter).

**snorting, adj.****fabulous**

*Slang.* Rarely heard nowadays.

**snotty, n.**

*Slang.* Sometimes *snottie*. Midshipmen wear buttons on their sleeves. A naval joke is that they are there to prevent the young sailors from wiping their noses on their sleeves. . . . An informal meaning of *snotty* is *short-tempered*.

**midshipman****snout, n., Slang.**

1. A police informer.
2. A *cigarette*, especially in prison argot.

**1. Slang. stoolie****2. Slang. butt****snowboots, n. pl.**

*Slang.* In Britain **galoshes** are what the Americans call *rubbers*, or *overshoes*. See also **gumboots**; **Wellingtons**; **boots**.

**galoshes****snowed up**See **Appendix I.A.1.****snowed in****snuff it**

*Slang.* Synonymous with **drop off the hooks**, i.e., *kick the bucket*.

*Slang. croak***snug, n.**

SEE COMMENT

At some **pubs**, the bar-parlor, a room offering more privacy than the rest of the establishment. Often called the **snuggery**.

**snuggery, n.**

*Slang.* One's particular hideaway at home. Also applied to a bar-parlor in a **pub**. See **snug**.

**den****sociable, n.**

Designed for two occupants partly facing each other.

**S-shaped couch****social contract**

SEE COMMENT

Historically, this phrase has meant a presumed voluntary agreement among individuals pursuant to which an organized society is brought into existence, or an agreement between the community and the governing authority defining the rights and obligations of each party. In Britain after 1974, it signified an unwritten arrangement between the Labour Government and the trade unions, whereunder, in consideration of **wage restraint** by the unions, the government carried out certain policies, such as price control, limitation of corporate dividends, maintenance of welfare benefits, etc., in favor of the unions. See also **pay policy**.

**sock drawer**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* To put something into one's *sock drawer* is to secrete it in safekeeping. For example, a confidential document, not intended for another's eyes. The closest American expression might be the *cookie jar*, a place to secrete money taken from the household budget.

**sod, n.***Slang. bastard*

*Slang.* This vulgar term of abuse should really not be used in mixed company. Technically, it cannot be applied to a woman. The reason is that it is short for *sodomite*. However, British youth of both sexes, unaware of its origin, are now heard to hurl it at persons of either sex. *Sod all* is an intensification of *bugger all*,

which is, in turn, an intensification of **damn all**, and means 'not a goddamned thing.' *Sod* means 'goddamn' in the expression *sod him (her, it, them)*. *Sodding* is another way of saying *goddamned*, as in *sodding little bastard*.

**sod all**. See under **sod**.

**sodding**. See under **sod**.

### **Sod's Law**

*Inf.* If anything can possibly go wrong with a test or experiment, it will. Originally applied to the natural sciences, the use of this law has been extended to cover day to day living and reads simply, *If anything can possibly go wrong it will*, to which has been added, *and it will happen at the worst possible moment*.

### **Murphy's Law**

### **soft furnishings**

In a British department store, if you wanted the drapery department, you would ask for *soft furnishings*; if you asked for the *drapery department* you would find yourself looking at dress materials. See also **draper's shop**.

### **curtain material**

### **soft goods**

### **textiles**

### **soldier on**

*Inf.* To *soldier*, often *soldier on the job*, means to 'loaf on the job' in both countries, to 'shirk.' To *soldier on*, by itself, means to 'persevere doggedly,' to 'stay with it,' 'keep plugging' or whatever else one who resembles John Bull does in the face of hopeless odds.

### *Slang.* **stick with it**

### **soldiers, n. pl.**

*Inf.* Bread cut into strips, to be dipped into soft-boiled eggs; term used mostly by children. Grown-ups call them *fingers*.

### **bread strips**

### **solicitor, n.**

But it is not that simple; *lawyer* in the sense of 'general practitioner.' See also **bar-rister**. In America the use of *solicitor* in the British sense is restricted to the office of solicitor general of the United States and of certain individual states.

### **lawyer**

**solitaire**. See under **patience**.

### **sonic bang**

### **sonic boom**

**soon as say knife**. See **as soon as say knife**.

### **SOP**

*Inf.* Not, as one might think from American usage, an abbreviation of *standard operating procedure*. This term originated as a response to the military *Who's in charge here?* It has come to be used by non-military personnel as well.

### **Senior Officer Present**

**soppy, adj., Slang.**

### **mushy**

**sorbet**. See **ice**.

**sorbo rubber**

Used in the manufacture of children's bouncing balls, dog's toy bones, as well as the interior of cricket balls.

**sponge rubber****sort of thing**

*Inf.* kind of; like

*Inf.* Appended to a statement, this phrase muddies or attenuates it somewhat, pulls its teeth a little, lessening its impact *ex post facto*, like *so to speak*, *more or less*, *practically*, and inelegantly, *kind of*, or (in the mouths of so many youths) *like*, both of which, however, more often come first. Thus: *He's a clever chap, but apt to get confused, sort of thing*, or, *The poor man is reduced to begging, sort of thing*. An ungrammatical and tiresome usage. To make matters worse, latterly, *sort of style* has raised its silly head.

**sort out****1. work out****2. take care of**

1. Very frequently used by the British in the best tradition of muddling through. Things are always going to be *sorted out* later, or will *sort themselves out*. There is a lurking suggestion of *mañana* in this amiable expression.

2. Another meaning altogether is to 'straighten (someone) out,' to 'let him have it,' to 'give him a going over.' Junior has taken the car without permission and Senior suddenly needs it: *Just wait till he gets back, I'll sort him out!* An irate American daddy might say, *I'll straighten him out!* or, *I'll tell him a thing or two!*

**souteneur.** See **ponce**.

**south of the Border.** See **(the) Border**.

**spadger, n., Slang.**

**sparrow****spaghetti junction****cloverleaf**

*Inf.* Jocular, semi-pejorative for any cloverleaf, but particularly for a complex one. The epithet was first applied to an especially complicated one in Birmingham, which evoked the image of a mess of cooked spaghetti.

**spanner, n.****wrench**

A *spanner in the works* is a *monkey wrench in the machinery*. A *box spanner* is a *lug wrench*.

**spare, bit of.** See **bit of spare**.

**spare, go.** See **go spare**.

**spare, going.** See **going spare**.

**spare, send (someone).** See **send (someone) spare**.

**spare ground****vacant lot****spare line****allocated line**

But not yet connected. Telephone term.

**spare room****guest room**

**sparkling-plug**  
See Appendix II.E.

**spark plug**

**spark out**

*Slang.* **pass out cold**

*Slang.* Usually, to *pass spark out*, meaning to 'pass out,' whether from booze, fright, or exhaustion. In an extreme case, it can even mean to 'pass out for once and for all time; to die.' But see **pass out**.

**spatchcock, v.t.**

**interpolate**

*Inf.* A *spatchcock* is a fowl hurriedly cooked after being killed. This curious word appears to be a shortening of *dispatchcock*—one quickly *dispatched* by being disposed of in a hurry. (Are there distant echoes of poaching in this?) Somehow *spatchcock* became a verb, meaning to 'insert' or 'interpolate,' with a hint that the insertion was the hurried result of an afterthought; and there is the implication that the interpolation changed the force and meaning of the original message. *Spatchcock* is not under any circumstances to be confused with a *spitchcock*, an entirely different kettle of *eel* which has been *split and broiled*. One can also *spitchcock* ('split and broil') a fish or a bird or a fowl, and thus we somehow get back to *spatchcock*!

**spate, n.**

**flood**

Used in America only metaphorically to mean an 'outpouring,' the word also refers to literal floodings in Britain.

**speaking clock**

SEE COMMENT

One dials a certain telephone number, and the 'speaking clock,' a usually very pleasant voice, answers with the correct time.

**speak up!**

**louder!**

An exhortation not to courage, not to candor, but simply to audibility.

**spectators' terrace**

**observation deck**

Airport term. See also **waving base**.

**Speech Day**

SEE COMMENT

Also *Prize Day*. An aspect of public, state, and prep school life. Prizes are given out, speeches are made, parents mill about, and tea is drunk.

**spencer, n.**

**1. thin shirt or sweater worn under dress**

**2. short tight-fitting jacket**

1. An old-fashioned garment, still sometimes worn by elderly ladies.

2. Either a short, sometimes fur-trimmed close-fitting jacket worn by women and children in the past two centuries, or a short, tight jacket with collar and lapels once sported by men.

**spend a penny**

*Inf.* **use a bathroom**

*Inf.* This is a term pertaining principally to ladies and derives from the fact that their arrangements, even in the simpler operations, in public places, once were different from men's in that the little cabinets involved were locked and required the insertion of a coin (it used to be a penny) in order to unlock them; just another bit of evidence to prove that it is a man's world. The term is less often used by men. Their euphemism is *have a wash*. The term is becoming old-fashioned and is used jocularly, nowadays, by the younger generation. The common euphemism

is *use the loo* or *go to the loo*. In a restaurant or other public place, one would not inquire as to the whereabouts of the *loo*; the anxious patron would ask either for the Gents' or the Ladies.' See also **pee**.

**spif(f)licate**, *v.t.*

*Slang.* **crush**

*Slang.* To knock the hell out of, to destroy.

**spin**, *n.*

**English**

Billiards term. Achieved by striking an object ball on a slant.

**spinney**, *n.*

**thicket**

A small wood, a thicket.

**spirits**, *n. pl.*

**hard liquor**

**Spithead nightingale**

**bosun**

*Inf.* In the Royal Navy. *Spithead* is a naval anchorage near Portsmouth, the *nightingale* the sound of a bosun's whistle.

**spiv**, *n.*

*Inf.* **sharp operator**

*Inf.* A person who lives by his wits, managing to skirt the law. More specifically, a petty criminal small-scale black market operator. Also applied to race-track touts.

**split-arse**, *adv., Slang.*

*Slang.* **lickety-split**

**split of a hurry**, *Inf.*

*Inf.* **one hell of a hurry**

**split on**

*Inf.* **squeal on**

*Inf.* See also **put (someone's) pot on; round on; grass; snout**.

**spoil**, *n.*

**rubble**

Rare in America, this British term is used to describe the material that comes out of a hole during excavation.

**sponge bag**

**toilet kit**

A small, zippered, waterproof bag of toilet articles. The old ones were like miniature duffle bags with drawstrings.

**sponge finger**

**ladyfinger**

But *ladyfinger* is now used in Britain.

**sport one's oak**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Originally and still mainly a university expression. An outside door would usually be of *oak*—or used to be, at any rate. *Sport*, in this curious usage, means 'show ostentatiously,' as in *sport a new shirt*. Thus, when you *sport the oak*, i.e., make a point of showing the outside of your front door to the public, you are *telling the world to stay out*; that you are busy and don't want to be disturbed, at any cost. Perhaps a closer definition would be *hang out the DO NOT DISTURB sign*.

**Sports Day**

SEE COMMENT

*Sports Day* is an annual function at most schools. On *Sports Day* the following things happen:

1. The parents are invited to watch the students engage in athletic competitions.

2. Tea is served in a huge **marquee** and the platters of goodies are distributed by well-scrubbed little boys.
3. It rains.

**spot, n.**

1. *Inf.* bit
2. **pimple**
3. **(decimal) point**

1. *Inf.* For example, a *spot* of lunch. A *spot of tea* means something more than just a cup of tea. It involves something solid as well, even if minuscule. A *spot to eat* is a *bite*. See **tea**.

2. *Inf.* Usually found in the plural. *Spotty* means 'pimplly' in a phrase like *a spotty youth*.

3. Where an American would express the number 123.45 as '123 point 45,' a Briton would say '123 *spot* 45.'

**spot-on, adv.**

*Inf.* **on the nose**

*Inf.* Meaning, 'in exactly the right place.' The British congratulated U.S. astronauts for landing *spot-on target*. Also **bang on; dead on**.

**spotted dog**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* *Roly-poly pudding* with raisins or currants. The image is that of a Dalmatian. Sometimes called *spotted Dick*. See **roly-poly pudding**.

**spring-clean, n.**

**spring cleaning**

For once, it's the Americans who add the *-ing*; usually it is the British. See **Appendix I.A.3**.

**spring greens**

**young cabbage**

With their heads still unformed. Very tender and tasty.

**spring onion**

**scallion**

**spun, adj.**

*Slang.* **fagged**

*Slang.* *Done in; tuckered out*. Past participle of *spin*, in its sense of 'whirling someone around,' perhaps by delivering a blow that sends him spinning.

**spunk, n.**

**seminal fluid**

*Slang.* *Seminal fluid*. But the meaning 'pluck' or 'courage' is the usual sense of *spunk*.

**squab, n.**

**back of car seat**

See **Appendix II.E**.

**squails, n. pl.**

SEE COMMENT

A game played with small wooden disks called *squails*, on a round table called a *squail board*.

**square, n.**

1. **paper napkin**

2. **mortar-board**

1. *Inf.* See also **serviette**.

2. *Slang.* University jargon.

**square**, *adj.*

**even**

*Inf.* As in *a square hundred* (pounds, e.g.), where an American would speak of *an even hundred*.

**square-bashing**, *n.*

**close order drill**

But in a more general sense, loosely applied to any type of marching about on a military parade ground or barrack square.

**squareface**, *n.*

**gin**

*Inf.* From the squarish shape of the bottles in which gin was originally sold in South Africa, and often still is in Britain (*Bombay, Gordon's, Boodles*, etc.)

**(the) Square Mile**

SEE COMMENT

The heart of the **City**.

**squarson**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

Combination of squire and parson, a **portmanteau** word.

**squash**, *n.*

**soda pop**

A soft drink. A *lemon squash* is a *lemonade*, an *orange squash* an *orangeade*, and so on. The drink is commonly made from a concentrate to which water (usually tepid) is added. See also **minerals**. *Squash* is also slang for a *crowded party or meeting*.

**squashed fly biscuits**. See **garibaldi**.

**squib**, **damp**. See **damp squib**.

**squiffer**, *n.*

*Slang.* **squeeze-box**

*Slang.* Usually refers to a concertina rather than an accordion.

**squiffy**, *adj.*

*Slang.* **tipsy**

*Slang.* Americans use *squiffed* which, however, indicates a somewhat more advanced stage of the curse of drink than *squiffy*.

**squireen**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

A *small landowner*; more commonly used in Ireland than England.

**squitters**, *n. pl., Slang.*

*Slang.* **the runs**

**S.R.N.**

SEE COMMENT

Common abbreviation for *State Registered Nurse*.

**staff**, *n.*

**personnel**

The British use the word *staff* where the Americans would say *servants* or, in a business, *employees* or *personnel*. **STAFF ONLY** is a sign frequently seen on doors in business establishments visited by the public, particularly hotels, restaurants and the like. *Short-staffed* would be *short-handed* in America. *Staff finder* is occasionally seen as a heading in British newspapers where the American equivalent would be *help wanted*. *Staff vacancies* is another phrase meaning the same thing. *Staff bureau* and *staff agency* are somewhat more elegant terms for *employment agency*. In educational institutions, *staff* is used to denote the entire teaching body, as opposed to *faculty*, the equivalent American term. In Britain, **faculty** refers only to departments, like the *Faculty* of Medicine, of Law, of Engineering, etc.

**staggerer, n.****Inf. blow**

**Inf.** In the sense of a 'riposte,' 'retort,' or a 'bit of repartee' that knocks the other person off balance. Sometimes used to describe an event that knocks the stuffing out of you.

**staging post****stopover**

**Inf.** By extension, used to describe a major preparatory stage, e.g., *The talks may prove to be a staging post on the road to peace.* Often, a regular stopping place, especially on air travel.

**stall, n.****1. stand****2. orchestra seat**

**1.** A *stall* generally is an *outdoor counter* or *stand* for the purveying of goods, particularly food (see **coffee-stall**). See also **set out one's stall**.

**2.** A *seat in the orchestra*.

**stalls, n. pl.****orchestra**

**The stalls** are the equivalent of *the orchestra* as a description of that part of a theater, concert hall, etc.

**stall, set out one's.** See **set out one's stall**.

**stand, v.i.****run**

A Briton *stands* for office; an American *runs* for it. One might wonder what the sociological implications are in this disparity of usage.

**standard, n.****grade**

Still used to indicate the year (first, second, etc.) at school, but rather old-fashioned now and restricted to primary school. **Form** is generally used of secondary and higher schools.

**Standard English**

SEE COMMENT

Commonly abbreviated to S.E. Considered by some to be the English used everywhere by educated people.

**standard lamp, n.****floor lamp**

Other American equivalents are *standing lamp* and *bridge lamp*.

**stand down****1. retire; withdraw****2. postpone**

**1.** To *retire* from a team, a job, the witness stand. Used both transitively and intransitively. In military circles, to *stand down* is to *go off duty*: in politics, to *withdraw one's candidacy*.

**2.** To *postpone*, to *discontinue temporarily*, as in *Rescue operations had to be stood down because of heavy seas*.

**stand in (someone's) light, Inf.****stand in (someone's) way****stand off****lay off**

To discharge temporarily employees who have become superfluous or, as they say in Britain, **redundant**.

**stand one's own****hold one's own**

**stand-up (piano)****upright (piano)****starchy, adj.****Inf. stuffy**

*Inf.* As in the expression *nothing starchy about him!*

**stargazey, n.****SEE COMMENT**

*Inf.* A kind of pie made in Cornwall with small fish, usually with the heads looking out through the pastry crust and stargazing. Also *starrygazey*.

**staring, adj., adv.****1. Inf. loud****2. Inf. raving**

*1. Inf.* Unpleasantly conspicuous, eye-shattering, as a *staring* pink tie or a weird checked vest.

*2. Inf.* Only in the common phrase *stark staring mad*.

**starkers, adj.****stark naked**

*Slang.* Sometimes *starko*. See **Harry**. . .

**stark ravers****Slang. nuts**

*Slang.* *Raver* by itself connotes homosexuality. As to the *-ers* in *ravers*, see **Harry**. . . An old-fashioned term, giving way to **bonkers**.

**start a hare****raise an issue**

*Inf.* Often time-wasting. But related to rousing an animal from its lair.

**starters, n. pl.****appetizers**

*Slang.* As in, *What do you fancy for starters, love?* Chi-chi restaurants tend to use the terms *starters* and *afters* self-consciously in menus.

**starting handle****crank**

Automobile term, now rather archaic. See **wind**, *v.t.*, and **Appendix II.E**.

**star turn****Inf. topnotch talent**

*Inf.* A **turn**, in vaudeville days, was an *act*; a *star turn* was a *headliner*. The term was extended to include a *top performer* in any field: *the tops*. It is used to designate the chief or central figure in any situation. But *star turn* can at times be used pejoratively, to describe a person who is a *star* in a way that doesn't do him credit.

**state school****public school**

For the meaning of *public school* as used in Britain, see **public school**.

**station calendar****bulletin board**

On the wall at major railroad stations.

**station-manager, n.****station agent**

Also *station-master*.

**statutory business****official business**

A basis for avoiding parking tickets for government vehicles in either country.

**stay, v.i.****live; reside**

Mainly Scottish: *I stay in Morningside, on the south side of Edinburgh, or, He comes from Aberdeen. Really? Whereabouts does he stay?*

**STD**

SEE COMMENT

To be on *STD* means to be hooked into the automatic long-distance dialing system. The letters stand for *Subscriber Trunk Dialling*. (See **trunk call**.)

**steading, n.****farmstead**

A farm with buildings.

**step out***Inf.* **step on it**

In England, to *step out* is to *hurry* or *hurry up*. Informally, it can also mean 'lead a joyful social life.' In America, to *step out* is to go to a party or dance, or on a date; sometimes, to go out on the town.

**stew, n.****fish tank**

In addition to all the conventional verb and noun meanings of *stew*.

**stick, n., v.t.****1. n., pole****2. n., Slang. guy****3. v.t., stake up****4. v.t., post****5. v.t., stand**

**1. n., Inf.** Ski terminology.

**2. n., Inf.** Particularly in an expression like, *He's not a bad old stick*.

**3. v.t., Inf.** Term used in gardening, with special reference to peas.

**4. v.t., Inf.** Especially in the sign **STICK NO BILLS**. Sign alongside Hyde Park (London): **BILL STICKERS WILL BE PROSECUTED**. See **hoarding**.

**5. v.t., Inf.** In the sense of 'bear' or 'tolerate,' as in, *I can't stick it a minute longer!*

**stick, get the.** See **get the stick**.

**stick, give (someone) some.** See **give (someone) some stick**.

**stickjaw, n.****chewy candy**

*Slang.* Life *taffy*, which is called **toffee** in Britain.

**stick no bills!** See **stick, 4**.

**stick out, v.i., Inf.***Slang.* **stick to one's guns****stick up****puzzle**

*Slang.* British robbers, as well as American, *stick up* their victims. But a second British slang meaning has its approximate American equivalent in the verb to *stick*, meaning to 'stump,' or 'present someone with an unsolvable problem.' In this connotation *stuck-up*, in Britain, would mean 'completely at a loss,' the American equivalent being *stuck*; but it can also indicate unjustified superiority in Britain as well as in America. (The more usual term for this obnoxious attribute in Britain is **toffee-nosed**.)

**stick, wrong end of.** See **(get hold of the) wrong end of the stick**.

**sticky finish****bad end**

*Inf.* The highly unpleasant kind one should do his utmost not to come to.

**sticky tape****adhesive tape**

See also **Sellotape**.

**sticky wicket**

*Inf.* A **wicket**, in **cricket**, is said to be *sticky* when it is drying out after rain. On such a wicket, the ball on its way to the **batsman**, after bouncing in front of him, behaves erratically, especially when bowled by a *spin-bowler* expert at imparting a twisting motion to the ball after it bounces. Obviously, a batsman batting on a *sticky wicket* is in a tough, tricky situation; and the term, like so many others from cricket, has been extended metaphorically to the general language. See **wicket**.

**tough situation****sting, v.t.**

*Slang.* To *sting* somebody such and such an amount for something is to 'soak' him, i.e., 'overcharge' him. Thus, in an antique shop, *What do you suppose he will sting us for that table?* Its use in America is normally confined to the passive participle (*stung*) in this context. In a sentence such as, *I'd love champagne but I don't want to sting you*, the considerate young lady is telling her escort that she doesn't want the dinner check to get too big.

*Slang.* **soak****stock-breeder, n.****cattleman****stockbroker belt****suburb for nouveaux riches**

In which the houses are *stockbroker Tudor*, *phony Tudor* in the manner of Anne Hathaway's Cottage.

**stockholder, n.****livestock farmer**

In this usage, synonymous with **stock-breeder** and nothing to do with corporations; but it can have the usual American meaning as well.

**stockinet, n.****elastic knit fabric**

Used especially for bandages.

**stockist, n.****retailer**

A shopkeeper who stocks the articles in question.

**stockjobber, n.****dealer in stocks**

In America, this word is most frequently used as a contemptuous reference to a stock salesman, particularly one who promotes worthless securities. In Britain it has no such shady connotation, describing merely an agent who acts as go-between or intermediary between brokers, never dealing directly with the public.

**stocks.** See **shares**.

**stodge, n., v.t., v.i.**1. *n.*, heavy food2. *n.*, glutton3. *v.t., v.i., Inf.* stuff

1. *n., Slang.* Used especially of the puddings served at boarding-school that lie so heavily on the stomach.

2. *n., Slang.* Who overeats and feels *stodgy*.

3. *v.i., Slang.* In the sense of 'stuff oneself.' See also **pogged**.

**stoker, n.****locomotive fireman**

The British and American usages are identical in shipboard terminology, but in Britain the term applies equally to railroad train crew members.

**stomach warmer****hot-water bottle**

Usage is regional and the American term is commonly used.

**stone, n.** See **Appendix II.C.1.f.**

**stone cladding****stone facing****stone the crows!****Inf. good heavens!**

*Inf.* A gentle expletive, an expression of disgust or surprise.

**stonewall, v.i.****Inf. stall**

*Inf.* The unsportsmanlike practice of playing for time in cricket. The trick is for the **batsman** merely to defend his **wicket** rather than attempt to score runs, so that time will run out. Like *keeping possession* in American football and taking plenty of time to go into and out of the huddle with one's eye on the clock, or *freezing the ball* in basketball. As with many cricket terms, it has been taken into the general language to describe *stalling for time*, which is close to, but not identical with the narrower American use of the term to mean 'obstruct discussion'.

**stonk, n.****Inf. going over**

*Slang.* Literally, a *heavy shelling*, a word based upon a World War II military term for a highly specialized artillery technique christened *Standard Regimental Concentration*, a mouthful quickly shortened to *Stonk*, and then erroneously applied to just about any artillery action in the way professional jargon is so often misapplied by amateurs. The term passed into civilian use to describe anything that is devastating, like being thoroughly chewed out by the boss, for instance.

**stony, adj.****Slang. broke**

*Slang.* Flat broke; stone broke, in fact.

**stood out****postponed**

Procedural term, in law.

**stooge about****Slang. kill time**

*Slang.* Somewhat more actively than, for example, playing solitaire; implies some activity, like a **pub-crawl**, or aimless driving around. See also **fossick**; **frig about**.

**stook, n.****shock of grain**

*Stack of sheaves of grain* stood on end in a field so that they remain upright.

**stop, v.t., v.i.****1. stay****2. fill**

1. Thus: *He stops in bed till noon*, or, *Why don't you stop at my house instead of the inn?* To *stop away* is to *stay away*. Also, *I'm happy and I want to stop like this*. A good pal will *stop up* with you all night when you're in trouble. With a bad cold, you may want to *stop in* for a couple of days.

2. Dental terminology. Cavities are *stopped* or *filled* in Britain, and a *stopping* is a *filling*.

**stoppage, n.****deduction from wages**

For example, withholding tax.

**stopping train**

An express is a **fast** train. A *stopping train* makes many stops at many intermediate stations.

**local (train)****store, n.**

It is also used to mean a 'shop,' usually a large one. *Stores* (n. pl.) means 'supplies,' like food provisions at home, or *stock* in the sense of the 'inventory of a business.' A common sign on small shops in villages: POST OFFICE AND STORES, where *stores* means 'provisions and supplies.' *In store* means 'in storage,' but also has the same figurative meaning as the American usage: "What has the future in store for me?" *Cold store* is *cold storage*. See also **shop**.

**warehouse****storekeeper, n.**

Of supplies, parts, etc. There is a special use in American naval terminology, describing one handling naval stores and spare parts. The British equivalent of *storekeeper* in the usual American sense is *shopkeeper*. See **shop** and **store**.

**employee in charge of supplies****stout, n.**

Dark brown; often asked for by the brand name "Guinness," among others less well known. See also **bitter**.

**strong beer****stove up, v.t.**

*Slang*. To disinfect generally, as to *stove up* clothing in a flop house; *delouse*. *Stove-up* is the noun describing the procedure.

**disinfect****straightened out**

*Slang*. Describing an official 'on the take.'

*Slang. fixed***straightforward, adj.**

This word means 'frank' and 'honest' in both countries. A common additional British meaning is 'simple,' in the sense of 'presenting no complications.' Someone is presented with a contract to sign and after reading it through says that it seems perfectly *straightforward*; or a garage mechanic looks at some engine trouble and happily answers that the problem is perfectly *straightforward*.

*Inf. cut-and-dried***straight on, adv.****straight ahead****streaky bacon**

The kind commonly seen in America, less so in Britain; having alternate streaks of fat and lean.

**bacon****stream, n.****1. lane****2. SEE COMMENT**

1. Traffic usually flows in *streams* in Britain rather than in *lanes* as in America. It is customary in Britain to speak of the left *stream*, the right *stream*, and the wrong *stream*.

2. *For school usage, see set, 1.* *Stream* is also used as a verb in this connection meaning 'classify according to ability' and then divide into groups.

**street, n.****1. Inf. class****2. Inf. alley**

1. *Inf.* *She's not in the same street as her sister* would be *She's not in the same class*, in America. And to be *streets ahead* of or *streets better* than someone is to *outclass* him.

To *win by a street* is to *win by a mile*. This term originated in horse-racing and is used metaphorically in other pursuits. *Win by a distance* is also said in racing.

2. *Inf.* If something's *up your street*, it's *up your alley*. Also *down your street*. See also **line of country**.

**street rough**, *Slang*.

*Slang*. **toughie**

**streets ahead of**. See **street**, 1.

**strength**. See **on the strength**.

'**strewth!**, *interj.*

*Inf.* **good God!**

*Slang*. A mild oath. It is a contraction of *God's truth*. Also spelled '*struth*'.

**strike off**

1. **disbar**

2. **revoke license**

1. Short for *strike off the rolls*, applying to lawyers.

2. Short for *strike off the register*, applying to doctors. But a doctor who is *struck off* in Britain may continue to practice, being deprived only of the right to prescribe dangerous drugs or to sign a death certificate.

**striking price**

SEE COMMENT

When a new issue of stock is issued on a bid basis with a minimum price per share stated, and the issue is oversubscribed, the issuing company allocates the offered shares among the bidders on an equitable basis at a *striking price*, i.e., a figure at which the bargain is *struck*, near the highest bid.

**Strine**, *n., adj.*

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* comic name for Australian speech, its sounds and idioms. This word, coined by an Australian, represents the nasal and swallowed deformation of *Australian* in the accents of that country.

**strip lighting**

**tubular fluorescent lighting**

**strip-wash**, *n.*

Not often heard. The common term is **bed bath**.

**stroke**. See **oblique**.

**strong**, *adv.*

SEE COMMENT

The British sometimes speak of a *four-strong family*, i.e., 'a family consisting of four persons.' Americans would normally refer to a *family of four*. The phrase *one-strong family* is also seen, meaning a 'family of one' or 'a person living solo.' Americans use *strong* this way, too, but generally in the case of larger groups such as military forces, and the noun usually precedes the number followed by *strong as in*, *a detachment 200 strong; a working party 150 strong*.

**strong flour**

SEE COMMENT

Flour made from durum, or hard wheat. It is the kind used in the making of *pasta* products.

**stroppy**, *adj.*

**bad-tempered**

*Slang.* To get someone *stroppy* is to rile him, get his goat, get his dander up. A *stroppy* kid is one that is said to need licking into shape: aggressive and quarrelsome.

**struck on**, *Slang.*

*Slang.* **stuck on; nuts about**

See synonyms under **mad on**.

**strung up**

*Inf.* **het up; strung out**

*Inf.* On edge; high-strung. *Strung* is seen in the American expression *high-strung* (**highly-strung** in Britain), but that describes a type of person, while *strung up* describes the condition of the moment. *Strung out* is the current vernacular in America, where it also means 'heavily addicted to drugs.'

**stuck in**. See **get stuck in**.

**stuck up**. See **stick up**.

**stud**. See **cat's-eyes**.

**studentship**, *n.*

**scholarship**

In the sense of an award of financial aid for a student. *Scholarship* is the common term in both countries, but *studentship* is used at some British colleges. See also **bursar; sizar**.

**stuff**, *v.t.*

*Slang.* **lay**

*Slang.* An unattractive word for copulation. To get *stuffed*, in this sense, would be the passive voice (if one can speak of the *passive* in connection with this activity); but used as an expletive, *Get stuffed!* is simply a vulgar way of saying *Get lost!* See also **Stuff that for a game of soldiers!**

**Stuff that for a game of soldiers!**

**Screw that!**

This peculiar expletive sentence refers to any foolish or unprofitable enterprise the speaker has finally decided to abandon. *How's that for a game of soldiers?* means 'Whaddya think of that mess?' in angrily describing a foul-up or sorry situation.

**stumer**, *n.*

*Slang.* **bum check**

*Slang.* By extension, a *counterfeit bill* or a *slug* (counterfeit coin); and by further extension, *anything phoney*.

**stump**, *n.*

**butt**

Cigar *stump* (also *stub*); cigarette **end**.

**stumps**. See **up stumps; wicket**.

**stump up**, *Slang.*

*Slang.* **pay up; come across**

**sub**, *n., v.i.*

**1. n., advance**

**2. v.i., Inf. make a touch**

**1. n., Inf.** An advance on future earnings or expectations, thus: *He had to take a £5 sub on next week's pay.*

**2. v.i., Inf.** To *sub* is to *make a touch*. *Touch* somehow evokes the image of a reluctant lender. With *on*, *sub* becomes transitive, taking as object the future earnings

or the lender. Thus, one can *sub on* next month's dividends, or *sub on* one's pal or daddy.

**subaltern, n.**

SEE COMMENT

(Accented on the first syllable.) A military term, denoting a commissioned officer below the rank of captain.

**sub-editor, n.**

**copy editor**

A newspaper term.

**subfusc, n., adj.**

**1. dull**

**2. SEE COMMENT**

1. *adj.* Its common meaning is figurative: 'dull,' 'characterless.' *Subfusc* university clothes are not necessarily *drab*; in this sense the word may mean merely 'quiet' or 'modest.'

2. *n.* It also has the literal meaning of 'dusky' in both countries. It is rarely used in America in either sense. It is a shortening of *subfuscous*—meaning 'somber; dusky.' At some universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, *subfusc* is used as a noun meaning the 'uniform worn for formal occasions,' such as commencement and the taking of exams. For men it consists of dark suit, socks and shoes, white shirt and white bow tie, gown, and mortarboard, the last being carried under the arm; for women, dark skirt (long or short), black stockings and shoes, white shirt, black scarf or choker, gown, and a beret in the shape of a soft mortar-board, with four points, so worn that one of the points lies on or above the middle of the forehead.

**subject, n.**

**citizen**

A British *subject*; an American *citizen*. There is still enough loyalty to the British monarch to permit the use of a word that might be offensive to the American sense of independence, at least since the Yorktown surrender. When a Briton speaks of himself as a *citizen*, it is usually of a town or city. He would seldom be a *citizen* of Great Britain, except in formal language, though there is a category referred to as 'citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies.'

**subscription, n.**

**dues**

A Briton pays his *subscription* to his club or other organization; never his *dues*. *Subscription* is an American euphemism for *price of admission* to a dance, political dinner, charitable affair, etc., in which use the British settle for *ticket*.

**subscription library**

**lending library**

**subway, n.**

**pedestrian underpass**

An American *subway* is called **underground** or **tube** in Britain. *Subways* in Britain are generally for getting to the other side of the street without peril to life and limb. *Subway* is beginning to be used in Britain in the American sense.

**sucking pig**

**suckling pig**

**sucks, n. pl.**

*Slang.* **washout (fiasco)**

*Slang.* *Sucks!* or *What a suck!* expresses derision at another's failure after a boast.

**sucks to you!, Slang.**

*Inf.* **so there!**

**sugar crystals. See coffee sugar.**

**sultana, n.**

In Britain a *sultana* is a small seedless raisin, light yellow in color. *Sultanas* are used in puddings, cakes, buns, etc. (see **bath bun**). In America *sultanas* are a variety of grape, pale yellow in color, which when dried become what Americans call *white raisins*. They are also used as a source of white wine. With an initial capital *s*, *Sultana*, in America, is a trademark for a particular brand of seedless raisin, whether dark or white.

**white raisin**

**Summer Eights.** See **Torpid**s.

**summer pudding**

SEE COMMENT

Line pudding bowl with crustless bread; fill with mush of any summer fruit and large chunks of bread without crust; cover top with bread; cool or freeze; turn out when mass is soaked and congealed.

**summer time****daylight saving time**

The American term is also used in Britain but to British ears the familiar American phrase sounds rather old-fashioned. The British are on G.M.T. (Greenwich Mean Time), which is five hours later than Eastern Standard Time. See also **B.S.T.**

**sump, n.****crankcase**

Automobile term. See also **Appendix II.E.**

**sun-blind, n.****(shop) awning**

**sunny intervals.** See **bright periods.**

**sun-trap, n.****sunny, sheltered place**

A phrase much used in travel advertising. The picturesque noun is an allusion to the elusiveness of the British sun, which must be *trapped* and sheltered from the wind.

**superannuation scheme****pension plan****superelevated, adj.****banked**

Of roads and highways.

**supplementary benefits.** See **National Insurance.**

**supply bill****appropriation bill**

A *supply bill* in Parliament is what the U.S. Congress calls an *appropriation bill*.

**supporter, n.****best man**

But only at a royal wedding. More commonly a fan of a sports team.

**supremo, n.****governor; overseer**

An official installed as supreme leader to take command over hierarchies previously established.

**surgery, n.**

1. doctor's (dentist's) office
2. doctor's (dentist's) office hours

## 3. day's schedule of doctor (dentist)

## 4. M.P.'s (lawyer's) session with constituents (clients)

## 5. M.P.'s (lawyer's) temporary outside quarters

1. A doctor's or dentist's office is always called his (her) *surgey* in Britain, never *office*.

2. *The period when he (she) is available at the office.*

3. *Doctor has a very large surgery today*, says the nurse through whom one is trying to get an appointment. She means he has a very heavy schedule, i.e., lots of patients that day.

4. *Inf.* When a Member of Parliament travels to his **constituency** (*district*) and holds a session at which he makes himself available to his constituents, he is colloquially said to *give a surgery*. The same usage applies to a lawyer who receives clients out of his office.

5. *Inf.* The place where this happens is also colloquially called a *surgery*.

**surgical spirit****rubbing alcohol**

More properly, **methyated spirit**.

**surround, n.****area surrounding**

A border around something, like a gravel walk around (or nearly all the way around) a rose garden, or a floor covering between a carpet and walls.

**surveyor, n.***approx.* **building inspector**

The general meaning is the same in both countries, but a *chartered surveyor* is a *licensed architect* and is usually engaged by a careful British prospective purchaser to look over a building before the contract is signed. If things go wrong later, the purchaser can sue the surveyor, who has received a fee for his written report. In this sense *surveyor* describes a privately engaged expert building inspector. A *building surveyor* is something different: a specialist in all aspects of real estate development, from negotiating for the purchase of the land through completion of the construction, including all aspects of financing, packaging and sale. There are large firms as well as individuals engaged in this activity, hired by the property developer usually at a fee equal to 10 percent of the total development cost.

**sus law**

## SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* *Sus*, in this expression, is short for *suspect*. This troublesome law corresponded, to a certain degree, to the American vagrancy laws and was subtitled 'loitering with intent.' The law, now repealed, permitted the police to question and even detain 'suspects' at random if they believed that there was reason to suspect that those involved might have been planning a criminal act.

**sus out**1. *Slang.* **case**2. *Inf.* **figure out**

1. *Slang.* As in *case the joint*, i.e., *reconnoiter*.

2. *Slang.* As in, *I'm trying to sus out what he means by it*.

**suspenders, n. pl.****garters**

Vertical ones, whether ladies' or men's; not the round kind like those worn by Knights of the Garter. *Suspenders*, the American term for the apparatus that holds up trousers, are called **braces** in Britain.

**swab, n., Slang.****oaf; Inf. jerk**

More formally, a contemptible person.

**swacked**, *adj.**Inf.* loaded*Slang.* Drunk, from a Scottish verb *swack*, meaning 'drink heavily.'**swagger**, *adj.**Inf.* swell

In the sense of 'fashionable' or 'smart,' but with the pejorative implication of self-satisfaction.

**swan**, *n., v.i.**Slang.* junket*Slang.* A trip of one sort or another whose ostensible purpose is official business, but whose primary motivation is pleasure. To *go swanning* is to take such a trip.**swan upping**, *v.*

SEE COMMENT

An annual function that goes back centuries: the taking up and marking of the swans that inhabit the Thames. The purpose of the activity is to make an official enumeration of the swans that live on the river.

**swat.** See **swot.****swede**, *n.*

yellow turnip

**sweet**, *n.*

dessert

Or *sweet course*. In America *dessert* is broad enough to include anything served as the last course. In Britain *dessert* is generally a fruit course served at the end of dinner. There is a good deal of Anglo-American confusion about this and a certain amount of internal British confusion.**sweet eff-all***Slang.* not a goddamned thing*Slang.* Seems to be a combination of **sweet Fanny Adams** and **damn all**, but the *eff* is more likely the *f* in *fuck* than the *F* in *Fanny*. With those two idioms and this and **bugger all** and **sod all**, the British appear to have gone to a good deal of trouble to invent ways of saying '*nothing at all*.'**sweet Fanny Adams**

nothing at all

*Slang.* Fanny Adams was a real live girl who was killed two years after the end of the American Civil War. Her murderer cut her into little pieces and threw them into a hop field. The legend of that obscene crime led to the coining of the name *Fanny Adams* as military slang for 'tinned mutton.' This seems to have nothing whatever to do with *sweet Fanny Adams* meaning '*nothing at all*.' Sometimes abbreviated to *sweet F.A.*, and believed by some to be nothing more than the euphemism discussed in the preceding entry.**sweets**, *n. pl.*

candy

Boiled sweets are *hard candy*.**sweet-shop**, *n.*

candy store

Synonymous with **confectioner's**.**swept-out**, *adj.*

streamlined

**swimming-bath**, *n.*

swimming pool

Originally an indoor *swimming pool*. The American term is taking over for outdoor as well as indoor pools.

**swimming costume**

Or **bathing costume** or *swimsuit* or *bathing suit*.

**bathing suit****swing-door, n.****swinging door****swingeing, adj., adv.**

*Inf.* Present participle of the archaic verb to *swinge*, meaning 'strike hard.' Now, as *swingeing*, meaning 'huge' or 'daunting.'

*Inf.* **whopping****swing it**

*Slang.* See **swing the lead**.

*Slang.* **goof off****swing the lead, Slang.**

More properly, *malingering* or *shirk duty*.

*Slang.* **goof off****swipes, n. pl., Slang.**

Also *weak beer*.

*Slang.* **lousy beer****Swiss roll****jelly roll****switchback, n.**

Now more commonly called **scenic railway**. But *switchback railway* is a term describing zigzag railways for climbing hills. Synonymous with **big dipper**.

**roller coaster****switched on**

*Slang.* Interested, excited, by art, marijuana, nature, anything. The American expression is also used.

*Slang.* **turned on****swizz, n., Slang.**

The longer form, *swizzle*, can be used as a transitive verb meaning to 'swindle.' But a *swizzle stick* is the bartender's tool for frothing a mixed alcoholic drink.

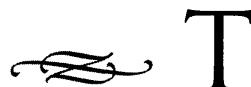
**swindle****swop, n., v.t., v.i.**

A country term. The scythe in question is a small one also known in the country as a **bagging-hook**.

**scythe****swot, n., v.t., v.i.**

*Slang.* *Swot* (also *swat*) means 'cram.' A *swot* is a *grind*, synonymous with **sap**. To *swot up* is to *cram* or *bone up* and is synonymous with *mug up* (see **mug, 2**).

*Slang.* **cram**



**ta** **thanks!**  
*Inf.* Heard increasingly. Americans have no corresponding informal term. See also **ta-ta**.

**table, v.t.** **submit for discussion**  
 This term means exactly the opposite of what it means in America, where to *table* an item is to *shelve* it or to postpone discussion of it, perhaps hoping it will never come up again. In Britain *lay on the table* means postpone indefinitely.

**table money** **allowance**  
 Expense money issued to officials who must entertain clients.

**tack, n.** *Slang.* **chow; grub**  
*Good tack is good eating.* Synonymous with **tuck**.

**Taffy, n.** **Welshman**  
 One of those objectionable nicknames (e.g., *Paddy, Paki*).

**tail.** See **top and tail**

**tail after** **pursue**  
 Follow closely.

**tailcoat, n.** **cutaway**

**take a decision** **make a decision**

**take against** **oppose**  
*Also, begin to dislike.*

**take (one) all (one's) time** **be all one can do**  
*Inf.* *It takes me all my time to pay for the food* means *It's all I can do to pay for the food*. Thus, *He's so fat it takes him all his time to get up the stairs*.

**take a rise out of, Inf.** *Inf.* **get a rise out of**

**take a scunner at (against), Slang.** **take a dislike to**

**to take away** **to go**  
 Referring to food which, in both countries, is prepared for consumption off the premises as in, *Sandwiches made up to take away*. Used attributively, without *to*, as in, *take-away coffee*, which would be *coffee to go*, or *takeout coffee*, in America.

**take down**, *Inf., Slang.*

1. *Inf. take (a letter)*
2. *Slang. take (cheat)*

**take first knock**

*Inf. go first*

*Inf.* A term taken from cricket; synonymous with **bat first**.

**take in charge**

**arrest**

See under **charge-sheet**.

**take into care**

SEE COMMENT

When a child is taken from its parents who are deemed unfit, in America the authorities are said to *take custody* of the child. In Britain, the child is *taken into care*.

**take it in turns to**

**take turns**

The British form is followed by the infinitive of the verb, the American form by a gerund. Thus in Britain two good friends of a sick man would *take it in turns* to sit by his bedside, while in America they would *take turns* sitting there.

**take no harm**

**suffer no harm**

**take on**

*Inf. catch on*

*Inf. Catch on* is used in Britain as well.

**take (someone's) point**

**see (someone's) point**

*I take your point* rather than the American *I see your point* or *I get your point*.

**take silk**

SEE COMMENT

Become a Q.C., *Queen's Counsel*, or K.C., *King's Counsel*, both specially recognized **barristers**. The title depends upon the sex of the sovereign. The word *silk*, by itself in this context, denotes such a counsel, thus: *John Jones, a silk, accepted the brief* (i.e., *took the case*). The *silk* is the robe worn to replace the ordinary robe worn by other than a Q.C. or K.C.

**take the biscuit**

*Slang. take the cake*

*Slang.* As in *That takes the biscuit!* To surpass all others, especially in stupidity, cheek, impudence, effrontery, and the like.

**take the mickey out of**

*Inf. act disrespectfully towards*

Aggressively undermine someone's self-confidence. Also, *take the mick out of*; *take the piss out of*.

**take the piss out of.** See **take the mickey out of.**

**take the rise out of**, *Inf.*

*Inf. get a rise out of*

**take the shilling**

**enlist**

*Inf.* From the days when the Recruiting Sergeant gave the new recruit a shilling, known as the *King's* (or *Queen's*) *shilling*.

**take (make) up the running**

**take the lead; set the pace**

A racing term, often used figuratively of, e.g., participants in a conversation who seem to compete with one another in their exchange.

**taking, n.**

*Inf.* To be in a *taking* is to be *upset*, to be having a *fit* of anger or nerves. An old-fashioned idiom.

*Inf.* state of agitation**talent-spotter**

Both terms used in both countries.

**talent scout****talk the hind leg off a donkey**

*Inf.* Or *off an iron pot*.

*Inf.* talk a blue streak**talk through (out of) the back of one's neck. *Inf.***

With never an end in sight.

*Inf.* talk through one's hat**tally plan**

A *tally plan* or *tally system* was the method by which a *tally shop*, owned or serviced by a *tallyman* or *tallywoman*, operated a retail business accommodating needy customers who could not pay cash, the accounts being recorded in a pair of matching books, one for each party, and usually paid weekly without billing. In depressed areas, the practice has given way to regular installment buying, called **hire-purchase**, or more popularly the **never-never**, in Britain.

**installment plan****Tannoy, n.**

*Inf.* A proprietary name gone generic.

*Inf.* P.A. system**tap, n.**

*Tap* (as a noun) is heard in America, *faucet* is also heard in Britain. But Americans speak of *tap-water*, never *faucet-water*.

**faucet****taped, adj.**

*Slang.* One who *has it all taped* has thought of everything, and provided for all contingencies; he's got it *all worked out*, and *buttoned down*.

*Slang.* nailed down**tablets. See shares.****tap stocks. See shares.****taradiddle, tarradiddle, n., *Inf.****Slang.* fib**tardy adj.**

Also has the American meaning of 'late.'

**sluggish****tariff, n.**

In Britain, this word used alone can mean 'hotel charges' or 'restaurant charges.'

**schedule of charges****tarmac, n.****1. blacktop****2. airfield**

1. In America *tarmac* refers to the bituminous binder used in the making of tar roads. *Tarmac* started out as a trademark for a binder for road surfaces, but now generally refers to any bituminous road surface binder. It is a shortening of *tar macadam*, which in America describes a pavement built by pressing a tar binder over crushed stone, and in Britain a 'prepared tar concrete poured and shaped on a roadway to construct a hard surface.' As a transitive verb, *tarmac* means to *tar* a road. See also **macadam**.

2. *Tarmac* has now acquired the specialized meaning of 'air-field,' especially the part made of this material.

**tart, n.**

1. **pie**

2. **loose woman**

1. What Americans think of when they recall Mom's apple pie or cherry pie would be an apple *tart* or cherry *tart* in Britain. For the meanings of British *pie* see **pie**.

2. Favorite epithet of jealous wives on the way home from a party at which their husbands have looked longingly at another female.

**tart up**

*Slang.* **doll up**

*Slang.* Often applied to interior decoration, and almost invariably pejorative, indicating that the décor was gaudy, and possibly tawdry as well. *He had his digs tarted up by a Knightsbridge designer.* Also used in reference to writing style: *She writes a dreadfully tarted up prose.* *Overdone* is the adjective that comes to mind, but perhaps it is stronger than that.

**ta-ta, interj.**

*Inf.* **bye-bye**

*Inf.* (First *a* as in *HAT*, second as in *HAH*, stress more or less equal). Such baby-talk is heard among adult cockneys, as is **ta**.

**tater, 'tatur, tatie, n.**

*Slang.* **spud**

*Slang.* The lowly *potato*, always welcome at the dinner table.

**tatt, n., v.i.**

1. **n. frills**

2. **v.i. fritter away one's time**

1. *n., Slang.* *The décor of the apartment was lovely and without tatt.*

2. *v.i., Slang.* Do more or less useless jobs just to pass the time.

**tatty, adj., Inf.**

**shabby**

See **grotty**.

**taws, n.**

**lash**

A thong, cut into narrow strips at the end, used for chastising children. Also *tawse*. A Scottish word.

**tax point, n.**

**effective date**

An example of this tax usage: **V.A.T.** (value added tax) on certain items went up from 8 percent to 25 percent May 1, 1975. An order for such an item is given April 25 for delivery May 2. You pay 25 percent, says the tax office: the *tax point* is the delivery date, not the date of the order.

**tea, n.**

SEE COMMENT

In Britain, one drinks afternoon tea at about 4:00 P.M., taken with **biscuits**, bread and jam, **scones**, and the like. But *tea* also covers an evening meal consisting of a light supper. *Tea* in this sense is heard primarily among the working class and children, and is really short for **high tea**.

**teach someone's grandmother to suck eggs**

**instruct an expert**

*Slang.* To attempt to instruct or advise someone more experienced than oneself, or to try to educate an expert on a matter within his field—like telling Albert Einstein how to approach the matter of relativity.

**tea lady**

SEE COMMENT

The member of the staff at the office or shop who makes and brings around the tea at 11:00 A.M., and 4:00 P.M. There will be a **biscuit** (*cookie*) or two as part of the offering. It is considered good practice to suspend business discussion during the ceremony. Occasionally tea gives way to coffee, but the functionary in question will never be called the *coffee lady*.

**tear a strip off (someone)***Slang.* **bawl (someone) out**

*Slang.* The *strip* is a noncommissioned officer's stripe. The expression, in military circles, suggests demotion for a misdemeanor.

**tearaway, n.***Inf.* **hellraiser**

*Inf.* The term does not necessarily imply a bad character. A *tearaway* is a wild youngster, a cut-up, who is probably going to straighten out in time.

**tease, n.***Inf.* **tricky job**

*Inf.* "It was quite a *tease*," said the Mr. Fixit, explaining why it took so long and cost so much for what had at first seemed the simple job of repairing the lawn mower.

**teat, n.**
**1. nipple**  
**2. bulb**

1. On a baby bottle.

2. The *rubber bulb* of a medicine dropper.

**tea-towel, n.****dish towel**

Mostly designed for drying dishes. Also referred to as a **washing-up cloth**.

**teetotalist.** See **TT**.**telegraph pole****telephone pole**

Both functions are served in both countries, which somehow assign different priorities to the respective wires.

**telephone box.** See **call-box; kiosk**.**telephonist, n.****switchboard operator**

(Accent on the second syllable.)

**telly, n., Inf.***Inf.* **TV**

Also, **goggle-box**. See also **have square eyes**.

**temporary guest****transient**

Hotel term.

**ten.** See under **twenty**.**tenner, n.****sawbuck**

*Inf.* A *ten-pound note* (*bill*).

**term, n.****trimester**

*Term*, in the British system, and *semester* and *trimester* in the American, are the respective designations for fixed parts of the school year. To complicate matters

still further, *terms* often have quite different names in different British institutions. As only one example, the three eight-week terms at Oxford are called Michaelmas, Hilary, and Trinity. At Cambridge they are Michaelmas, Lent, and Easter. *Half-term* is a brief vacation occurring about midway through the term in most British schools.

**terminus, *n.***

**terminal**

A railroad or bus term. The British, however, use *terminal* to refer to the city center where one picks up the bus to the airport.

**terrace, *n.***

**row of joined houses**

A specialized British use of the word. A *terrace house* is known as a *row house* in America. See **semi-detached**.

**terraces, *n., pl.***

**standing room**

Used only of a sports arena. Sometimes *terracing*.

**Test. See Test Match.**

**test bed, *n.***

**proving-ground**

Literally, an iron framework for resting machinery being tested.

**Test Match**

**international match**

This is principally a cricket term, now also applied to rugby. A *Test Match*, e.g., between England and Australia, has about the same importance in England as the *World Series* in America. The English team is always referred to as the *England side*, never the *English side*; but the Australians are always referred to as the *Australian side*, the West Indians as the *West Indian side*, etc. *Test Match* is often shortened to *Test*: thus, *What happened in the Melbourne Test?* See also **cricket**.

**that cock won't fight**

**that excuse (plea, plan) won't work**

**that's it!**

**right!**

**that's the job!**

*Slang.* **that's the ticket!**

*Slang.* Often *that's just the job!*

**that's torn it!**

*Slang.* **that does it!**

*Slang.* Said in exasperation when things have gone wrong.

**theatre, *n.***

**operating room**

Short for *operating-theatre*; a *theatre sister* is an *operating-room nurse*; a *confinement theatre* is a *labor room*. See comments under **lint** and **sister**.

**then?**

SEE COMMENT

A bit of friendly jocularly. *Then?* at the end of a sentence is little more than punctuation. "Been doing a bit of work, then?" says the gardener to the boss as he notes a weeding job done in his absence. "Off on a holiday, then?" says your rustic neighbor, as he strolls by and catches sight of you lugging a valise to your car.

**theological college**

**divinity school; seminary**

**there's a . . .**As in, *There's a good boy.***that's a . . .****there's no shifting it***Inf.* Once he's made up his mind, there's no shifting it. Seems to be used only in the negative.*Inf.* it's unshakable**thermic lance****blowtorch****thick ear, Slang.****cauliflower ear****thin on the ground***Inf.* Often used to mean 'short of help,' 'understaffed.'**few in number****third party insurance****liability insurance****Third Programme**

SEE COMMENT

The BBC (British Broadcasting Company) broadcasts four different radio programs, Radio 1, 2, 3, and 4, in addition to two television programs, BBC 1 and BBC 2. In the early days, there were only three radio programs, known as the First, Second and Third Programmes. The last-named maintained a higher intellectual and artistic level than the other two, so that to *be Third Programme* was to be something of an intellectual, or to have leanings in that direction, and to be interested and more or less versed in the arts. Now it's *Radio 3* for the high-brows.

**threap, n., v.t.****1. n. accusation.****2. v.t. scold**

Heard in Scotland and the North of England.

**three-star. See four-star.****threshold agreement****union cost-of-living contract****Throgmorton Street***approx. Inf.* Wall Street; the market

*Inf.* A street in the City of London whose name is used as a nickname for the London Stock Exchange, and the securities fraternity and their activities generally, just as nearby *Mincing Lane* is used for the wholesale tea business. The British often use the term **the City** to denote the financial community as a whole. See **City**.

**throstle, n.****song-thrush****through, adj.****1. connected****2. still in contention**

1. This meaning is restricted to telephone operator usage. Thus, *You're through!* means 'Your party is on the line!' or 'You're connected!' When a British telephone operator says *You're through!* it sounds about as grim to an American as *Your time is up!* must sound to a Briton. In Britain the operator does not tell you when your time is up; instead there are three short beeps on a long distance call or a series of rapid pips on a local call from a pay station. No pips when you dial directly from a private telephone.

2. This meaning relates to elimination competitions in sports, called **knock-outs** in Britain. Thus (in cricket): *In the North, Yorkshire and Lancashire are through.* That means that they are 'still alive' in American sports parlance. *Through*, in American English, would more likely be taken to mean the exact opposite: 'finished,' 'eliminated.'

### throw one's bonnet (cap) over the windmill

Evokes the Victorian atmosphere of a young lady involved in an impetuous elopement; but this expression is current usage.

### throw caution to the winds

### throw out

Referring to adding an extension to a structure: to *throw out* a wing, thus enlarging a building or a room. The British also talk of *throwing out* a pier, i.e., building one out into the water.

### add on; build

### throw up, *n. Inf.*

In both cases, it's *the sponge* or *the towel* that is thrown up signaling defeat.

### throw in

### thumping, *adj., adv.*

*Inf.* Rarely used by itself to mean 'enormous,' as in *a thumping lie*; usually in combination with *great* or *big*; *a thumping great feast*. *Thumping good* means the same thing: *a thumping good victory* is an *overwhelming* one.

### *Inf.* enormously

### thundering, *adv.*

*Inf.* In the sense of 'extremely'—*a thundering good actor*; *a thundering good piece of mutton*. An old-fashioned word.

### *Inf.* mighty

### thunder-mug, *n.*

*Slang.* The commode that may contain it used to be referred to as a *thunder-box*. Like the commodities in question, the terms are not common but are heard now and then.

### chamber pot

### thunderous, *adj.*

A nautical term for a meteorological phenomenon to give one pause.

### line squall

### tick, *v.t., v.i.*

Please *tick where appropriate*, seen in instructions for filling out a form or on an advertisement coupon. A *tick list* is a *check list*. But see **on tick**; **tick off**.

### check

### ticket-of-leave, *n.*

A *ticket-of-leave man* is a prisoner who has served part of his sentence.

### parole

### ticket pocket

Tailor's term.

### change pocket

### ticket tout, *Slang.*

### *Slang.* scalper

### tickety-boo, *adj.*

*Slang.* Also spelled *tiggerty-boo*. All right.

### *Slang.* hunky-dory

**tick, half a. See half a tick.**

**tickler, n.**

*Inf.* A delicate situation; a tricky problem.

*Inf.* **poser**

**tick off**

**1. check off**

**2. tell off**

See **tick**.

**tick, on.** See **on tick**.

**tick over**

**turn over**

Referring to a car or other engine. Extended metaphorically, for example, to office or business routine: *When he's away on holiday, things just tick over* (activity slows down).

**tic-tac**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* An arm-movement signaling system used by *tic-tac men* at racetracks to flash the changing odds to resident bookies.

**tiddler, n.**

**minnow**

*Inf.* This word is sometimes used informally as an epithet for little creatures, like kittens and children, and can even be stretched to cover abstractions, like clues. "We haven't found a tiddler yet," says the police investigator, meaning, "We haven't found even the most trifling clue."

**tiddl(e)y, adj., Inf.**

*Inf.* **tipsy**

Formerly, a word meaning 'a drink.'

**tidy, adj.**

**neat**

A matter of preference. *Tidy* is not heard much in America except, perhaps, among genteel older ladies. It is common in Britain. KEEP KENT TIDY appeared on signs all over that lovely county. A sign reading PLEASE PARK TIDILY sometimes adorns the parking lot (**car park**) outside a pub. *Tidy-minded* means 'logical,' 'methodical.'

**tied, adj.**

SEE COMMENT

This word has different meanings in Britain depending upon the noun it modifies. A *tied cottage* was one occupied by a farm worker at a nominal or no rent, as a perquisite of his job; but he was not protected by the Rent Act covering most ordinary tenants and making it virtually impossible for landlords to evict them. If he lost his job, he lost his cottage. This semi-feudal system has been abolished, and agricultural workers enjoy the protection of the Rent Act. A *tied garage* is one that serves one company exclusively. A *tied house* is a pub affiliated with a particular brewery and serving only that brewery's brand of beer and ale. It is the opposite of a **free house**.

**tie-pin, n.**

**stickpin**

Synonymous with **breast-pin**.

**tiffin, n., v.i.**

**lunch**

Of Anglo-Indian origin, meaning 'light meal.' Also used as a verb, 'take a light meal.'

**tig, n.****1. tizzy****2. tag**

1. A *tizzy* in Britain was slang for *sixpence* (now no longer used; see **Appendix II.A**). The British use *tizzy* (in the sense of 'state of agitation') the way Americans do. See also **tizzy**.

2. The children's game, so called from its primary meaning: a *light touch*. *Tag* is used as well.

**tiggerty-boo.** See **tickety-boo**.**tights, n. pl.****pantyhose**

A term borrowed from the ballet world. A British saleswoman (shop **assistant**) would understand *pantyhose* but she and the customer would normally say *tights*.

**tile-hung, adj.****shingled with tiles**

Describing country houses, the roofs and sides of which are shingled with reddish-brown clay tiles, usually square or rectangular, occasionally rounded at the bottom or top.

**till, conj., prep.****through**

In expressions of duration of time. *Till* (or *until*) a certain hour or date, in Britain, means 'through,' or, in the awkward American phrase, 'to and including.' At times, however, *till* doesn't literally mean 'through.' Thus, *He'll be away till Sunday* might mean 'He'll return some time in the course of Sunday.' Further questioning is needed to clear up the ambiguity. See also **Appendix I.A.1**.

**timber, n.****lumber**

In America *timber* means 'standing trees,' but the British use the term the way Americans use *lumber*. However, see **lumber** for British use of that word.

**time!, interj.****closing time!**

*Inf.* The full phrase is: *Time, gentlemen, please!* See **during hours**. Pub terminology. Closing time is at hand.

**time and a half****(approx.) 150% overtime pay**

Overtime expression.

**time-limit, n.****deadline****The Times**

SEE COMMENT

*The Times* of London or the *Financial Times*. Sometimes, even *The New York Times*.

**timetable, n.****schedule**

In British schools the list of periods and subjects is called a *timetable* as is the case with train schedules etc. The Americans refer to it as the *schedule*.

**tin, n.****can**

A food container; and naturally the British say *tin-opener*, *tinned food*, etc.

**tinker, n.****itinerant mender**

Not much seen any more except for a mender of pots and pans. In Ireland, the word is used informally as an approximate equivalent of *gypsy*.

**tinker's cuss***Inf.* **tinker's dam(n)**

*Inf.* The *cuss* is slang for *curse*, of which *damn* is only one example. The British use *damn*, and sometimes even *curse*, in this connection. The thought is that tinkers are free with their cussing.

**tinkle, n.***Inf.* **ring; phone call**

*Inf.* As in, *Give me a tinkle when you're next in town.*

**tinpot, adj.***Slang.* **crummy**

*Slang.* Heard in America in the derogatory expression 'tinpot politician' or 'tinpot gambler.'

**tin tack****carpet tack**

A short, tinned iron tack.

**tip, n., v.t., v.i.****dump**

The British *tip* their *refuse* into a *refuse tip*. Americans *dump* their *garbage* into a *garbage dump*. A *tip-truck* is a *dump truck*. An American might well be mystified at the sight of a sign out in open country reading NO TIPPING.

**tipped, adj.****favor**

As in *tipped to win the election* (or *the high jump*); or *tipped as the next Prime Minister*. Applied to cigarettes, *tipped* would mean only 'filter tip.'

**tip-top, adj., Inf.****first rate****tip-up seat****folding seat****tiresome, adj.****tedious; wearisome****titbits, n. pl.****tidbits**

Both spellings are seen in Britain.

**titchy bit****just a drop**

*Inf.* A *tiny bit* of anything.

**tit in a trance****restless soul**

*Slang.* Describes a person who jumps around from one chore to another, not knowing which to tackle first. Synonymous with **fat in a colander**.

**tittup, n., v.i.**

SEE COMMENT

A word uncommon in America. A *tittup* is an exaggerated prancing and bouncing sort of movement, characteristic of a spirited horse. To *tittup* is to move that way.

**tizzy, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Slang.* The old sixpence, now obsolete. *Tizzy* is a corruption of *teston* (also *testoon*), a term now obsolete meaning certain European coins one side of which was decorated with a head. The term *teston* was specifically applied to a Henry VIII shilling which suffered from inflation and fell in value to sixpence. See also **Appendix, II.A; tig, 1.**

**toad-in-the-hole, n.****sausage in batter**

Beef or sausages coated in batter and baked.

**tobacconist's shop**

**cigar store**

**Toc H.** See as dim as a Toc H lamp.

**tod.** See on one's tod.

**toff, n.**

*Slang.* **swell**

*Slang.* A distinguished person. More indicative of a way of life than wealth.

**toffee, n.**

**taffy**

But for toffee means 'at all,' as in, *He can't play bridge for toffee, i.e., he plays badly.*

**toffee-nosed, adj.**

*Slang.* **stuck-up**

*Slang.* Snobbish. *Stuck-up* is used in Britain as well, but see **stick up**.

**to hand**

**at hand; available**

A shop will have certain merchandise *to hand*, or *ready to hand*, i.e., *available*. Your letter *to hand*, however, used in old-fashioned correspondence, means 'Your letter received.' A notice on the quarterly telephone bill reads: "Any call charges not *to hand* when this bill was prepared will be included in a later bill." See **Appendix I.A.1.**

**toke, n.**

*Slang.* **grub; chow**

*Slang.* Food generally, but it has the special meaning of *dry bread*. Synonymous with **tack; tuck**.

**tolly, n., Slang.**

**candle**

**Tommy Atkins**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Any private in the British army. The original Thomas Atkins was a private of the 23rd Royal Welch Fusiliers serving under Wellington's command. His name was chosen for a specimen question-and-answer form in a soldiers' handbook around 1815. *Tommy Atkins* has also been used as an epithet for a rank and file member of any type of organization. *Tommy*, by itself, is also slang for *brown bread*, or *rations* generally, of the inferior sort that used to be handed out to privates and laborers.

**Tom Tiddler's ground**

**red light/green light**

A children's game: one stands in front, all the rest some distance behind him in a line. The ones in back try to sneak forward. The one in front can turn around whenever he chooses and if he sees anyone moving, he sends that one back to the starting line. Also known as *sly fox* or *peep-behind-the-curtain* or *Grandmother's steps* or *footsteps*, depending on what part of Britain you're in.

**ton, n.** See **Appendix II.C.1.g.**

**ton, n.**

**100**

*Slang.* The expression *the ton* means '100 m.p.h.' Thus the proud owner of a motorcycle says, *It can do the ton*. *Ton-up*, as an adjective (e.g., the *ton-up boys*) is a somewhat derogatory term referring to the motorcycle set, the type that do 100 and scare you to death.

- tone, n.** **whole tone**  
Musical term. See **Appendix II.F.**
- tongue sandwich, Slang.** *Slang.* soul kiss
- too good to miss** *Inf.* too good to pass up  
*Inf.* See also **miss out on.**
- toothcomb, n.** **fine comb**
- toothful** *Inf.* thimbleful  
*Inf.* A very small drink (of whiskey, etc.).
- top, n.** **head (beginning)**  
As, for instance, in the expression *top of the street*. See also **bottom.**
- top and tail** SEE COMMENT  
*Inf.* The process of pulling off the stem (*topping*) and nipping off the little brown tuft at the bottom (*tailing*) of gooseberries, to prepare them for cooking. This can be done with the help of a knife, or, by the more adept, with the fingers.
- top gear** **high gear**  
See also **Appendix II.E.**
- top-hole, adj.** **great**  
*Slang.* Anything the speaker regards as *first rate*.
- topliner, n.** **headliner**
- top of one's bent** **heart's content**
- top of the bill, Inf.** *Inf.* **headliner**
- (at the) top of the tree** **(in the) highest rank**  
*Slang.* At the higher reaches of one's profession.
- topping, adj.** *Inf.* **great**  
*Inf.* Simply terrific. Rather old-fashioned.
- topside, n.** **top-round**  
Butcher's term, the outer side of round of beef.
- top up** **fill**  
For example, the gas tank, the crankcase, the battery, a drink. Also used of salary.
- torch, n.** **flashlight**
- (the) Torpids, n. pl.** SEE COMMENT  
Oxford boat races. These are *bumping races* (see **May Week**). The Torpids are the Oxford equivalent of the Cambridge *Lent Races*. Oxford calls its equivalent of the Cambridge *May Races* the (*Summer*) *Eights*.

**Tory, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Member of the Conservative Party. A colloquialism favored in headlines; often used pejoratively.

**tossed, adj.***Slang.* **tight**

*Slang.* In the sense of *drunk*.

**toss off, Slang.****masturbate****tosticated, adj.****befuddled**

*Slang.* *Perplexed*, usually with the implication of drink. Sometimes *tossicated*. The noun *tostication* means *bewilderment* or *perplexity*. A corruption of *intoxicated*.

**tot, n.****dram**

Whiskey is often understood, but it can denote a small portion of any beverage.

**tote betting****pari-mutuel betting****totem, n.****hierarchy; order**

*Inf.* Used in expressions like 'I am a liberal-radical of the old totem,' i.e., *of the old order*. Apparently derived from the top-to-bottom order on totem poles.

**to the wide****utterly**

*Inf.* *Done to the wide* means 'done in' or 'dead drunk,' depending on the context, so be careful. To distinguish: Use *whacked to the wide* when you mean 'done in' (but still on one's feet) and *dead to the wide* or *sloshed to the wide* to describe the condition of extreme intoxication, but *dead to the wide* can mean merely 'unconscious' (without the aid of liquor) if the context makes it clear.

**totting-up procedure****point system**

Whereby, on a cumulative basis, one's driving demerits reach a total sufficient to result in the suspension of one's license for a given period.

**touch, n.***Slang.* **thing**

*Slang.* In the sense of a particular 'sort of thing': *I don't go for the sports car touch*.

**touch-lines, n. pl.****sidelines**

Side boundaries in some sports.

**tour of ops.** See under **ops room**.**tout, v.i.****scout race horses**

Americans and British are both familiar with the racetrack *tout* who furnishes advice on how to bet.

**tower block.** See **block**.**town, n.**

SEE COMMENT

To someone in England, *town* is *London*, even though London is not a town but a city. One has, for example, spent the day *in town*; tomorrow one is going *to town* or *up to town* and the *town* in question is always London.

**town and gown**

SEE COMMENT

Non-university and university groups, respectively, at Oxford and Cambridge especially. *Town*, in this phrase, denotes those persons in the town who are not connected with the university as students, fellows, etc. *Gown* means the 'university people.' The phrase *town and gown*, with the same connotations, is not unknown in America and is used occasionally in some American college towns and cities. In Britain, *townee* is university slang for one of those persons who collectively constitute *town*. In American college towns, *townie* means the same thing, and like *townee*, is pejorative.

**town boundary**

city limits

**track, n.**

lane

A traffic term, referring to a particular lane of a highway.

**trade, n., v.i.**

(do) business

*Trade* is often used in Britain where Americans would say *business*, e.g., *He is in the necktie trade*. A *roaring trade* is a *rushing business*. *Trader* and *tradesman* mean 'shop-keeper' or 'craftsman,' as opposed to one engaged in a profession. A *trading estate* is a *business area*, sometimes more particularly a shopping center or a small factory zone. *Trading vehicles* are *commercial vehicles*, and *trade plates* are *dealer's plates*. To *be in trade* is to *keep a retail store*.

**trade(s) directory book**

yellow pages

The American term is now used in Britain as well.

**trade(s) union**

labor union

Shortened to *union* oftener in America than in Britain. The British name comes from the fact that membership is based on the worker's craft, rather than on the industry in which he is employed. See also T.U.C.; **social contract**.

**trading estate. See trade****trafficator, n.**

directional signal

On an automobile etc. See **winker**.

**traffic block**

traffic jam

**traffic warden**

traffic officer

Special officers particularly concerned with parking offenses who also assist the police in the regulation of traffic.

**tram, n.**

streetcar

Short for *tram-car*.

**tranche, n.**

1. bracket  
2. block (of stock)

(Pronounced TRAHNSH or sometimes TRONSH in imitation of the French pronunciation of the word.)

1. Fancy equivalent of **slice** and **band**, in tax terminology.
2. Part of a stock issue.

**transfer, n.****decal***Decal* is a shortening of *decalcomania*.**transferred charge call****collect call**This is the correct technical term for this operation in Britain. *Reverse-charge call* is a popular variant.**transport, n.****transportation**A Briton would ask, *Have you transport?* rather than *Have you (got) transportation?* A sign in an American hotel signifying an office making guests' travel arrangements would read **TRANSPORTATION**; in a British hotel, **TRANSPORT**.**transport café****truck drivers' all-night diner**In Britain this might also be called a *lorry drivers' all-night pull-up*. See also **café**.**transport system****transit system****trapezium, n.****trapezoid**In America a *trapezium* is a quadrilateral having no sides parallel. In Britain it denotes a quadrilateral having two sides parallel, which in America is always called a *trapezoid*.**traps, n. pl.***Inf.* **gear***Inf.* *Traps* means 'personal belongings,' especially 'luggage.' A Briton might ask a porter to get his *traps* into a taxi; Americans would say *my things* or *my stuff*.**traveller.** See **commercial traveller.**In the U.S. spelled *traveler*.**travelling rug.** See **carriage rug.****treacle, n.****molasses****treat***Inf.* **terrifically***Inf.* An old-fashioned Briton might say to the lady: *You dance a treat*, or he might say: *My wife is taking on a treat* (i.e., *making a terrific fuss*) about the lack of service.**treble.** See under **double, 1.****trendy, adj.***Inf.* **faddish, fashionable; with it***Inf.* Applies to clothes, furniture, ideas, anything. Sometimes used as a substantive to mean 'trendy person.' The connotations are usually pejorative.**trews, n. pl.****tartan trousers**

In the old days, short ones were worn by children under kilts. Now only military wear.

**trick cyclist***Slang.* **head shrinker***Slang.* The word also means a 'cyclist who performs tricks.'**trifle, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A dessert. The base is sponge cake (or ladyfingers, called **sponge fingers** in Britain) soaked in liqueur, wine, sherry, or rum, to which custard and jam and fruit and rich milk or cream are added. Very sweet.

**trilby, n.****slouch hat***Inf.* A man's soft felt hat with a lengthwise dent in the crown.**trillion.** See **Appendix II.D.****Trinity.** See under **term.****Trinity House**

SEE COMMENT

An institution begun under Henry VIII and still going strong. Responsible for pilotage and aids to navigation around the British coasts, such as lighthouses, pilot boats, beacons, licensing of pilots, etc. It corresponds more or less to the U.S. Coast Guard, without the latter's functions in the military or excise fields. Its members are known as *Trinity Brethren*.

**tripe and onions***Inf.* **trash***Inf.* Like *tripe*, a condemnation of a worthless thing.**tripos, n.**

SEE COMMENT

(Pronounced TRY'-POSS.) Honors examination at Cambridge University. The term is derived from the three-legged stool (*tripos*) on which the Bachelor of Arts sat to deliver his satirical speech on commencement day. The speech itself was formerly expected to be in Latin.

**tripper, n.***approx.* **excursionist**

A pejorative term for those who are having a day out at the shore, in the country, visiting stately homes, etc. The trip occasionally lasts longer than a day.

**troilism, n.**

SEE COMMENT

One ignorant of its pronunciation (TROY'LIZM) might have guessed that this word had something to do with Troilus, the Trojan hero and lover of Cressida. But it is nothing nearly so romantic, but rather sexual activity in which three persons take part simultaneously.

**trolley, n.****pushcart**

*Trolley* in Britain means also a 'hand-lever operated small truck' that carries railroad workers along the rails; but a *trolley-table* (sometimes shortened to *trolley*) is a *tea wagon*. *Trolley* is also the name given to the wheeled shopping carts used in supermarkets, as well as the rolling luggage carriers supplied at airports, and in Britain, at some of the railroad terminals. A *sweets trolley* is a *dessert cart*.

**trooping the colour(s)**

SEE COMMENT

Annual ceremony on the Horse Guards Parade in Whitehall, London. The regimental flag (the *colour*) is borne aloft between lines of troops and handed to the sovereign. This ceremony occurs on the official birthday of the monarch, June 13. (Elizabeth II was born on April 21, a date on which the weather is uncertain.)

**truck, n.****gondola car**

*Truck* is the term that would be used by the layman, whereas a more knowledgeable person would call it an *open goods wagon*. What Americans call a *truck* in railroad parlance is a **bogie** in Britain. The American *road truck* is a **lorry** in Britain.

**truckle bed****trundle bed****trug, n.**

SEE COMMENT

A convenient flattish garden basket coming in many sizes, made of thin woven wooden strips.

**trumpery, adj.****cheap**

In the sense of 'tawdry' or 'gaudy.' Sometimes also used as a noun denoting something that fits the description.

**trumps, come up or turn up.** See **come up trumps**.

**truncheon, n.****billy**

A short club or cudgel, also known in America as a *nightstick*.

**trunk call****long-distance call****trunk enquiries****long-distance information**

England is a small country and when you want to ascertain an out-of-town telephone number, you dial a three-digit number to get the desired number anywhere in the United Kingdom and all of Ireland, whether long distance or local. See also **enquiries**.

**trunk road.** See **arterial road**.

**try, n.***approx.* **touchdown**

In *rugger*. See under **football**.

**try it on***Inf.* **try it out**

*Inf.* With the strong implication that one is taking a shot at something in the hope of getting away with it. Hence, the noun *try-on*.

**TT, n., adj.****teetotaler; teetotal**

*Inf.* And the British occasionally say *teetotalist* instead of *teetotaler*, but it all points to the same degree of rectitude.

**tube, n.****subway**

Synonymous with **underground**. **Goggle box** is the equivalent of the American slang use of *tube* for TV. See also **subway** for British use.

**tub-thumper, n., Inf.***Inf.* **soapbox orator****T.U.C.**

SEE COMMENT

Stands for *Trades Union Congress*, much more closely linked to the Labour Party than the A.F.L.-C.I.O. is to any American party, and a much more powerful political force. See also **social contract; trade union**.

**tuck, n.***Slang.* **eats**

*Slang.* Indicating a big meal, particularly of the gourmet variety. Variants are *tuck-in* and, less commonly, *tuck-out*. *Tuck-in* is also a verb meaning to 'put on the feed-bag,' that is, 'eat hearty.' A *tuck-shop* is a *pastry shop* and a *tuck-box* is one for the safeguarding of goodies and is generally school jargon. To *tuck into* something is to *dig into* it, that is, to *pack in* a hearty meal. See also **tack; toke**.

**tumble to**

*Inf.* To *tumble to* a concept, a hidden meaning, etc. is to *grasp* it, catch on to it, get the point of it. Synonymous with **twig**.

**catch on to****turf, n., v.t.**

Both terms, in both substantive and verbal uses, are synonymous in both countries, but *turf* is almost always used in Britain. One unit of the stuff (i.e., a standard size piece of ready made lawn) is called a *turf* in Britain, a *sod* in America. *Turves* are normally 1' × 3' in Britain; *sods* 1' × 1' in America. For wholly unrelated uses of both terms in Britain see **sod, n.** and **turf, n.**

**sod****turf, n.**

*Inf.* Preceded by a possessive, an expression that seems to transcend all class barriers, as in, *On me own turf, I sez wot's wot* or, *Let you give me lunch? Oh no, dear boy, we're on my turf now.*

*Inf.* **neck of the woods****turf accountant**

A euphemism for *bookmaker*. **Commission agent** is an equally euphemistic synonym.

**bookie****turf out**

*Slang.* Usually applied to rubbish, whether a pile of old magazines or undesirable people.

**throw out****turn, n.****1. vaudeville act****2. dizzy spell**

1. This is a vaudeville term. *Turn* in this sense is short for *variety turn* or *music-hall turn* and by extension can denote the performer as well. See **star turn**.

2. Turn can mean 'shock' (*It gave me quite a turn*) in both countries. Less educated Britons also talk of having a *turn* to describe the experiencing of a *dizzy spell*.

**turn-about, n.**

Of policy, attitude, etc.

**abrupt change****turn and turn about****alternately****turncock, n.****water main attendant****turning, n.****turn**

The *first turning on the right* means the 'first right turn.' The British say, *Take the first turning on the right* and the Americans, *Take your first right*. *Turning* has apparently come to mean *block*, i.e., the space between two *turnings* in the original sense of *turn*. It has been used in such phrases as *a medium length turning*, *a short turning*, etc. See **Appendix I.A.3**.

**turn out, v.t.**

In Britain one *turns out* a room or a closet by moving everything out of it, cleaning it up, and then moving everything back.

**clean up****turn the Nelson eye on**

*Inf.* To *wink at* (something); to overlook it, act as though nothing had happened. Admiral Nelson (1758–1805) lost the sight of one eye in 1793 during the French Revolutionary Wars. In 1801, he ignored an order to cease action against the

**turn a blind eye to**

Danes at Copenhagen by putting his telescope to his blind eye and claiming that he hadn't seen the signal. He continued the battle and won. Hence, to *turn a Nelson eye* on something is to pay no attention to it, to ignore it, to pretend that nothing has happened.

**turn-up, n.**

**1. trouser cuff**

**2. upset**

1. The term *cuff* in Britain is confined to sleeves.

2. In sports.

**turn up one's toes, Slang.**

*Slang.* kick the bucket

**turn up trumps.** See **come up trumps.**

**turtle-neck, adj.**

**round-neck**

Applied to sweaters with round collars skirting the base of the neck. For the American sense of *turtleneck*, see **polo neck**. See also **roll-neck**.

**tushery.** See under **Wardour Street**.

**twee, adj.**

**arty**

*Slang.* Or *terrible refeened*. Usually seen in the phrase *fearfully twee*. Implies archness, affected daintiness, quaintness-for-quaintness' sake, and so on.

**tweeny, n.**

**assistant maid**

*Inf.* A maidservant, one who assists both cook and chambermaid, and whose position is thus *between* downstairs and upstairs. Also *tween-maid*.

**twelfth man**

**standby**

*Inf.* In **cricket**, the side consists of eleven players and a *twelfth man* who is present to take the place of an injured or otherwise unavailable player. The term has come into general use to signify a *standby* in any situation.

**twenty**

**a pack of**

Refers to cigarettes. In shops you ask for either *twenty* or *ten*. Thus, *Twenty Players, please*. When you buy from a machine there may be any number of variations, seven, eight, twelve etc., depending on the machine. See also **packet**.

**twicer, n., Slang.**

*Slang.* **double dealer**

A cheat; a deceiver.

**twice running**

**twice in a row**

**twig, v.t.**

*Inf.* **catch on to**

*Slang.* In the sense of 'understanding.' *Dig* is a common slang synonym in America; sometimes heard in Britain as well. Synonymous with **tumble to**.

**twin-bedded.** See under **double-bedded**.

**twin with . . .**

**linked with . . . ; sister-cited with . . .**

Seen on roadside town signs to indicate a special formalized friendly relationship with a town abroad. A variant is the phrase *friendship town* followed by the name of a related community. Thus, driving along, you might see

CHICHESTER  
TWIN WITH CHARTRES

OR

ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
FRIENDSHIP TOWN  
WIESBADEN

with the twin town usually chosen on the basis of similar industries or general interests and often quite similar in size.

**twist**, *v.t.*, *Slang*.

**swindle**

**twister**, *n.*, *Slang*.

*Slang*. **sharpie**

**twit**, *n.*

*Slang*. **jerk**

*Slang*. A foolish or insignificant person.

**twitten**, *n.*

**alley**

An enclosed type of narrow walk in a village or town, as opposed to open country, where it would be called a *footpath*.

**twizzle**, *v.t.*, *v.i.*

**1. spin**

**2. weave**

1. *Slang*. No American slang equivalent. To *twizzle* somebody or something *around* is to *twist* or *spin* him (it) *around*, e.g., in order to examine from all angles.

2. *Slang*. Used intransitively, it means 'weave about,' 'meander.'

**two (ten) a penny**, *Inf.*

*Inf.* **a dime a dozen**

Something of little value.

**twopence coloured**

**gaudy**

*Inf. Spectacular*, with a slightly pejorative tinge. Cheap. In common speech, the phrase usually comes out *twopenny* (pronounced TUP'-P'NY) *coloured*; its opposite is **penny plain**.

**twopenny-halfpenny**, *adj.*

*Inf.* **junky**

*Inf.* (Pronounced TUP'-P'NY HAY'-P'NY.) It can mean 'worthless,' 'negligible,' 'nothing to worry about,' or even 'contemptible,' depending on the context. See also **grotty**.

**two pisspots high**, *Slang*.

*Slang*. **knee-high to a grasshopper**

**two-seater**, *n.*

**roadster**

Does anybody still say *roadster*? Maybe *sports car* is closer in feeling, if not as accurate.

**two-star**. See **four-star**.

**two-stroke**, *n.*

**oil and gasoline mixture**

Suitable for two-stroke engines. This term appears on many service station roadside signs.

**two-up-two-down**, *n.*, *Inf.*

SEE COMMENT

A small house with two floors, each having two rooms.

# U

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<b>U</b>	See Appendix I.C.6.
<b>U.D.I.</b>	<b>unilateral declaration of independence</b>
<b>ulcer, n.</b> Open sore on a surface of the body, external or internal. Also a corrupting influence.	<b>canker sore</b>
<b>unbelt, v.t., Slang.</b>	<i>Slang.</i> <b>shell out</b>
<b>undercut, n.</b> 1. Butcher's term. The British use <b>fillet</b> (pronounced FILL'-IT) for the same cut. See <b>Appendix II.H.</b> 2. Boxing term.	1. <b>tenderloin</b> 2. <b>uppercut</b>
<b>underdone, adj.</b> Referring to meat, supposedly rare but really insufficiently cooked.	<b>raw</b>
<b>underground, n.</b> Also called the <b>tube</b> . A <i>subway</i> in Britain is an <i>underground pedestrian passage</i> .	<b>subway</b>
<b>under observation</b>	<b>patrolled</b>
<b>under offer</b> For sale, but only if the owner chooses to reject a pending offer.	<i>approx.</i> <b>for sale</b>
<b>under the doctor</b>	<b>under the doctor's care</b>
<b>under the harrow, Inf.</b>	<i>Inf.</i> <b>in distress</b>
<b>unfit, adj.</b> Because injured or ill. Used in sports reporting and announcements at the game.	<b>unable to play</b>
<b>unharbour, v.t.</b> A hunting term: to dislodge a deer from shelter.	<b>dislodge</b>
<b>unit trust</b> A good way to save for retirement.	<b>mutual fund</b>
<b>university man</b> The British make a fuss about one's having graduated from college, or university as it is called. The British are notoriously prone to putting lots of initials after people's names, particularly on business letterheads. These initials may refer to <b>Birthday Honours</b> , membership in a trade or professional association, or just col-	<b>college graduate</b>

lege degrees. On an ordinary business letterhead it would not be uncommon to see listed *John Jones, B.A. (Oxon.)*, *George Smith, B.Sc. (Cantab.)*, etc. (*Oxon. and Cantab.* are abbreviations reflecting the Latin spellings of Oxford and Cambridge.)

**unmade road.** See under **metalled road**.

**unmetalled road.** See under **metalled road**.

**unofficial strike**

**wildcat strike**

**unseen, *n.***

**sight translation**

In an examination or classroom recitation: *He did well in his Latin unseens.*

**unsocial hours**

SEE COMMENT

Term used in industrial disputes to describe working hours that interfere with workers' social lives, like evenings, weekends, and holidays. Not overtime, which can occur in any job, but the regular hours in jobs like those of bus drivers, railroad personnel, night watchman, etc.

**unstable verge.** See **verge**.

**up, *adv.***

**to London**

See also **down; down train**.

**up, *adj.***

**out of bed**

*Up*, in America, is ambiguous, in that it can mean 'awake' or 'up and about.' In Britain it means the latter—'out of bed.'

**up a gum tree**

*Slang.* **up the creek**

*Slang.* In a pickle; in a fix. See also **in a cleft stick; on a piece of string; bunkered; under the harrow; snookered; up the spout**.

**up for the Cup**

**in town for the big occasion**

*Slang.* Originated in the North Country, where it is pronounced OOP FOR T'COOP (OO short as in HOOF, and the T' almost inaudible), and refers to coming up to London to support the team in the **football (soccer) Cup Final** at Wembley Stadium.

**upper circle**

**second balcony**

In a theater. See also **stall; pit; gods**.

**upper ten**

*Inf.* **upper crust**

*Inf.* The upper classes; short for the *upper ten thousand*, an analogous phrase that originated in America.

**uppish, *adj., Inf.***

*Inf.* **uppity**

Putting on airs.

**upsides.** See **get upsides with**.

**up-stick, *v.i.***

*Inf.* **pack up and go**

*Inf.* This can describe moving one's entire ménage or simply clearing up after a picnic. From former nautical slang meaning 'set a mast.' Cf. **pull up sticks**.

**up stumps***Inf.* **pull up stakes**

*Inf.* To *clear and leave*. One of the many terms derived from cricket. Not to be confused with **stump up**. *Draw stumps* means the same thing: *clear out*. *Stumps* are the three uprights in the ground supporting two small cross-pieces (*bails*), the whole structure constituting the *wicket* (See **wicket**, 1). To *up* or *draw stumps* is to close the match, an operation that is extended figuratively to the *winding up* of a situation or phase.

**up the junction***Slang.* **up the creek**

*Slang.* In a tough spot; in a fix. The creek in the original reference flowed with human excrement, and those caught upstream were bereft of a paddle.

**up the pole**1. *Inf.* **dead drunk**2. *Slang.* **in a fix**3. **crazed**

1. *Slang.* In this meaning, the very opposite of the American 'on the wagon.'

2. *Slang.* In a predicament.

3. *Slang.* By anything, not merely drink.

**up the spout***Slang.* **in a fix**

*Slang.* Used of any predicament, but, like *in trouble* in America, often understood to mean 'pregnant' when the context permits of the possibility of that interpretation.

**up the wall.** See **drive (someone) up the wall**.

**up to the knocker,** *Slang.*

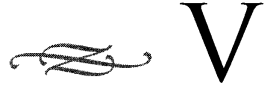
*Inf.* **in great shape**

**up train.** See under **down train**.

**U.S.,** *adj.*

**unserviceable**

*Slang.* The term, always pronounced YOU ESS, originated in the Civil Service, in government laboratories. *Where's the Bunsen burner? Taken away; it's gone You Ess.* If you haven't guessed it, the *U* is the *un-*, and the *S* is for *-serviceable*. Also written *U/S*.



**v.** **very**  
Common abbreviation in informal correspondence. See also **Appendix I.D.9.**

**(the) V & A** SEE COMMENT  
The *Victoria & Albert Museum* in London; almost invariably called **V&A.**

**vac, n.** **vacation**  
(Pronounced **VACK.**) Also, a school vacation. See also **come down, 2; holiday.**

**vacancies n.** **help wanted**  
Also, **situations vacant.** Signifying unoccupied positions.

**vacant possession** **immediate occupancy**  
One sees in most real estate advertisements the expression *vacant possession on completion*, meaning 'immediate occupancy on closing title.' This is sometimes qualified by the addition of the phrase *subject to service occupancy* or less commonly, *service occupations*, meaning 'subject to the occupancy of part (rarely all) of the premises by persons living there are rendering services in payment of rent.' The purchaser can get them out by legal means, but it is an arduous process. It almost always applies to agricultural properties.

**vacuum flask** **thermos bottle**  
See also **dewar.** A vessel with a double wall enclosing a vacuum.

**vains I! See fains I!**

**value.** See **good value.**

**value, v.t.** **appraise**  
Whence *valuer*, the usual term for *appraiser*, who makes his livelihood by estimating the value of various objects or land.

**Value Added Tax.** See **V.A.T.**

**valve, n.** **tube**  
Radio term.

**van, n.** **1. closed truck**  
**2. baggage car**  
**1.** Large or small. In America usually restricted to big ones. See also **pantechnicon.**  
**2.** Railroad term.

**van, removal.** See **pantechnicon; removals.**

**variety, n.**

**vaudeville**

See also **music-hall.**

**variety turn.** See **turn.**

**varnish, n.**

**nail polish**

**V.A.T.**

**sales or excise tax**

(Sometimes pronounced VEE-AY-TEE, sometimes VAT.) Sometimes VAT, abbreviation of *Value Added Tax*, which replaced the old purchase tax and the selective employment tax, a sort of payroll tax in the service industries. V.A.T. resembles the American Manufacturers' Excise Tax, and derives its *Value Added* label from the fact that at each successive stage of the production of an artifact, the person or entity involved is obliged to add a certain percentage to his charge, which he collects on behalf of Inland Revenue (the national tax authority) and pays over to them at quarterly intervals. At the same time he can recover the V.A.T. amounts that other people have charged him on his acquisitions which go into what he is producing. Thus, a bicycle manufacturer passes on to the Inland Revenue the tax he has collected, but recovers the tax he has paid on, e.g., metal, tires, etc. V.A.T. applies not only to tangibles but to services as well. A writer passes on the percentage he has added to his fee, but gets back the percentage he has paid on writing-paper, telephone, and other things that he has had to pay for in order to perform his professional duties.

**V.C.**

SEE COMMENT

Stands for *Victoria Cross*, the highest military distinction. Next in order are C.M.G. (Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George); D.S.O. (Distinguished Service Order); M.C. (Military Cross). G.C. stands for *George Cross*, awarded for extreme civilian bravery (dating from World War II).

**verge, n.**

**grass shoulder**

*Verges* along roads in Britain vary in width and are favorite spots for picnicking **trippers**. Making oneself at home on the *verge*, however narrow, is a British phenomenon. Americans are amazed to see the equipment employed in this happy activity: folding tables and chairs, ornate tablecloths, electric kettles, elaborate picnic baskets, deck chairs, too; everything but the kitchen sink. In Britain one sees parkway signs reading **SOFT VERGES**, but, when conditions are appropriate, **HARD SHOULDER**. Why *shoulder* in this case rather than *verge*, and why the singular, nobody knows. **UNSTABLE VERGE**, another common road sign, is another term for *soft shoulder*. See also **berm**.

**vest, n.**

**undershirt**

For what Americans mean by *vest*, the British say *waistcoat*. See also **singlet**.

**vet, v.t.**

**check**

*Inf.* With particular reference to candidates for a job, but now commonly used as well in security checking. By a logical extension, *vet* can mean 'authenticate,' referring to a work of art or a holograph, which is certified genuine after being checked up on. One can also *vet* a manuscript for accuracy. This term is derived from the practice of sending animals, especially race horses, to a veterinarian surgeon before purchase.

**vice-chancellor, n.**

A university term denoting the active head of the institution. The *vice-* is used because in Britain the **chancellor** is an honorary officer, always a prominent person, sometimes even royalty.

**president****view, v.t.**

In connection with selecting a residence. See **order to view**.

**inspect****viewpoint, n.**

A special British meaning in addition to *point of view*, as in America. See **look-out**.

**lookout point****village, n.**

*Village* in Britain is more a description of a way of life than a label applied to a particular political subdivision. The usual demographic distinction between *village* and *town* in Britain is based simply on population, and the break comes somewhere around 3,000.

*approx.* **small town****vinaigrette, n.**

A small box, usually silver, with a fretwork inner lid; frequently Georgian, more often Victorian; now greatly prized by collectors. They originally contained vinegar or salts; ladies carried them to help them through fainting spells. They now make nice pill boxes.

## SEE COMMENT

**visitors' book**

The American equivalent at a private home is *guest book*; at a hotel, *register*. The term applies not only to private homes, but also to inns and boarding-houses. *Register* is the term commonly used in large British hotels.

**guest book; register****viva, n.**

*Inf.* (Pronounced VY'VA.) Short for *viva voce*, Latin for 'aloud.'

**oral examination**

# W

**w.** **with**  
*Inf.* A common abbreviation in informal correspondence. See also **Appendix I.D.9.**

**Waac, n.** **Wac**  
*Inf.* (Pronounced WACK.) A member of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in World War I. This became A.T.S. in World War II and is now WRAC, for Women's Royal Army Corps. The female branches of the air force and navy are, respectively, the W.R.A.F. (rhymes with GRAPH), Women's Royal Air Force, and the W.R.N.S. (pronounced WRENS), Women's Royal Naval Service. See also **Wren.**

**waffle, n., v.i.** 1. *n., Slang.* **twaddle**  
 2. *v.i., Slang.* **gabble**  
 3. *v.t., v.i., Inf.* **yelp**  
 1. *n., Slang.* As a noun *waffle* describes anything silly or useless.  
 2. *v.i., Slang.* To *waffle* conversationally is to engage in silly chatter; to *gabble*, *prate*.  
 3. *v.t., v.i., Slang.* To *waffle* a cry of pleasure is to *yelp* it. Rarely, *woffle*.

**wage restraint** **wage control**  
 See also **pay policy; social contract.**

**wage-snatch, n., Inf.** **payroll holdup**

**wages sheet** **payroll**

**wage stop, n.** SEE COMMENT  
 The policy of not allowing a person to receive more money from unemployment insurance than he would earn if he were working. Also used as a transitive verb, *wage-stop*, signifying the application of this policy.

**waggon, wagon, n.** **car**  
 Railroad term, especially *goods-waggon*, meaning 'freight car.' A *waggon shed* is a *car barn*. The American spelling with one *g* is gaining precedence.

**wag it** *Slang.* **play hookey**  
 Synonymous with **play truant**. Also, *play wag* or *play the wag*.

**waistcoat, n.** **vest**  
*Waistcoat* is rare in America, and when used is more often pronounced WESKIT than WASTECOTE. In Britain, it should be pronounced as spelled or with the first *t* silent, and the preferred American pronunciation is considered at least colloquial, or even vulgar, though it was considered correct not many decades ago. *Waistcoat* is used in Britain the way *hat* is used in America in expressions like to *wear several*

*waistcoats* or *wear more than one waistcoat*, i.e., to act in a number of different capacities. In America, one is said to wear several *hats* to indicate activity in different capacities. For British meaning of *vest*, see **vest**; **singlet**.

**waits**, *n. pl.*

**Christmas carolers**

**wait for it!** *interj.*

1. *Slang*. **take it easy!**; **hold your horses!**

2. *Slang*. **get this!**; **mind you!**

1. *Slang*. Extended from its use in the army by sergeants teaching new recruits the drill ("Present—wait for it—arms"). Do not begin until you hear my order.

2. *Slang*. Further extended to mean 'wait till you hear this,' and used on the model of the army command as a pause word to underline the irony of the following statement.

**wake-up operator**

SEE COMMENT

If you have no alarm clock, or don't trust the one you have, you can dial the hotel operator before retiring for the night and ask to be called at a fixed time next morning. The operator will ask you to hang up, after taking your number, and will ring you back, presumably to 'test your bell.'

**walkabout**, *n.*

**campaign stroll**

*Inf.* Taken by candidates for election; also by the monarch, on certain occasions.

**walking stick**. See **cane**.

**walk out**, *v.i.*

*Inf.* **go steady**

*Inf.* A courtship term. By contrast, *walk out on* somebody means *desert that person*.

**walk slap into**. See **slap**.

**wallah**, *n.*

*approx.* **-man**

A servant or employee charged with the performance of a particular service. Thus, the member of the household staff who worked the **punkah** was known as the *punkah-wallah*, and so on. Applying the term to American situations, *wallah* would appear to come out simply as *-man*: the individual who repairs your typewriter is the typewriter-*man*; cf. *iceman*, *barman*, etc. A *bag-wallah*, in the old days, was a traveling salesman. Nowadays the term is either old-fashioned or jocular, depending on the use.

**wallpaper music**

**piped music**

*Inf.* *Muzak* is the trademark in both countries.

**wank**, *v.i.*

*Slang*. **jerk off**

*Slang*. Masturbate.

**want**, *v.t.*

1. **take; require**

2. **need; lack**

1. Example: *It wants a bit of courage to sail the Atlantic alone.*

2. Example: *All the wheels want is a drop of oil; that picture wants to be hung higher; that child wants a good spanking.* In this connection a special use is found in archaic expressions of time: *It wants ten minutes to twelve* meaning 'it is ten minutes to twelve.' The British tend to avoid *want* in the sense of 'desire' or 'wish,' for reasons of politeness. Where an American would say, *I want this changed*, or *Do you want a memo?* a Briton

would usually say, *I would like this changed*, or, *Would you like to have a memo?* To Britons, *I want* may sound imperious, and *Do you want?* is considered less polite than *Would you like?* or *Do you wish?* A British usage sometimes heard in America is *want* in the negative, for *shouldn't*, as in, *You don't want to oil this machine too often.* This usage means that 'it is not the best (or the right) way to treat it.'

**warder, n.**

**prison guard**

**Wardour Street**

*approx. movie business*

*Inf.* A street in London that is the center of the film industry and used figuratively to refer that business, the way Americans use *Hollywood*. The films themselves are shot elsewhere. Wardour Street used to be noted for its antique and imitation-antique shops, especially the latter, giving rise to the term *Wardour Street English*, meaning 'sham-antique diction,' the type common in inferior historical novels. This type of language is also called *gadzookery* or *tushery*.

**wardship, n.**

**custody**

Of minor children, in divorce matters.

**warned off**

**banned**

A euphemism applied to owners, trainers, jockeys, or bettors (**punters** in Britain) who break the rules of racing and are prohibited from attending races. The banning is effected by the Jockey Club, located at Newmarket, the headquarters of British racing.

**wash, n.**

**use of the bathroom**

*Inf.* When your host asks whether you would *like a wash* he is offering you the use of *all* his bathroom facilities.

**wash, v.i.**

*Inf.* **stand up**

*Inf.* Always used in the negative: *It (that story, that excuse) won't wash.* See also **wear**.

**(The) Wash.** See under **(The) Fens**.

**wash-cloth, n.**

**dishrag**

Sometimes called *dish clout*.

**washing-book n.**

**account book**

*Slang.* An informal *account book*, for instance as between friends on a trip where one pays all the expenses and there is a settlement at the end. It can also mean a 'running score,' as during a social weekend of bridge. No American slang equivalent.

**washing things**

**toilet articles**

**washing-up bowl**

**dishpan**

**washing-up cloth**

**dish towel**

Sometimes called a *tea-towel* or *wash-cloth*.

**wash leather**

**chamois**

Often shortened to *leather*; also known as *chamois-leather* and *shammy*.

**wash up**

*Do the dishes* would confuse a Briton no end because of the restricted meaning of **dish** in his country: 'platter' or 'serving-dish.' Logically, he calls his *dishwasher* a *washing-up machine*. To him a *dish-washer* is a *water wagtail*, a small bird equipped with a long tail that it keeps wagging constantly, as though it were washing a platter. See **wash**, *n*.

**do the dishes****waste bin****wastebasket****waste land****unused land****waste-paper basket****wastebasket****watcher!** *interj.**Inf.* **hi! howdy!**

*Slang.* Probably a corruption of *what cheer?*, an old greeting meaning *how's it going?* There are those who say, however, that it is a running together of *what are you (doing here, up to, etc.)*. *Wotcher* is the preferred cockney spelling.

**watch-glass**, *n*.**watch-crystal**

The American equivalent is used in Britain by jewelers, seldom by the general public.

**watching brief**, *n*.

## SEE COMMENT

A law brief for a client indirectly involved in or concerned with a matter to which he is not a party. Its technical use refers to the situation of a lawyer charged with the duty of attending litigation in which the client is not directly involved, where, however, a point of law affecting the client generally may be involved. To *have* (or *hold*) a *watching brief*, broadly speaking, is to *keep aware* of a situation that may ultimately involve your interests.

**water**, *n*.**river; pond; lake**

One sees occasional river, brook, pond, or lake names in which *Water* (with a capital W, as befits part of a proper noun) is used where *River*, *Brook*, *Pond*, or *Lake* would be used in America. Thus, *Aften Water* and *Eden Water* (rivers), *Derwent Water* (a lake).

**water-cart**, *n*.**sprinkling wagon****watersplash**, *n*.**ford**

Shallow brook running across a road, only a couple of inches high. Sometimes shortened to *splash*.

**waving base****observation deck**

At an airport. The British expression implies much livelier activity than just looking. At Scottish airports it is called **spectators' terrace**.

**Wavy Navy****Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve**

*Inf.* Not to be confused with the Royal Naval Reserve. The name comes from the officers' cuff braid in the form of a wave, as opposed to the straight braid of the Navy or the approximately diamond pattern of the Naval Reserve.

**wax**, *n*.**rage**

*Slang.* A *dreadful wax* is a *towering rage*. And *waxy* is *jumpy*.

**way, n.***Inf.* To be *in a way* or *in a great way* is to be *in a dither* or *in a tizzy*.**dither; tizzy****wayleave, n.**

A right of way rented to a company etc.

**easement****Way Out**Ubiquitous sign in public places. *Exit* signs seem to be confined to theaters and car parks.**Exit****way, permanent.** See **permanent way**.**wayzgoose, n.****printing company's annual picnic****W.C.**Stands for *water closet*. One of many euphemisms. See **loo**.**toilet****w/e****weekend**Common abbreviation in informal correspondence for *weekend* (*week-end* in Britain). Not merely a designation of a part of the week, rather more the name of a social practice among those who can spare the time. See also **Appendix I.D.9**.**Weald, n.**

SEE COMMENT

The *Weald* is a district in southern England including parts of the counties of Kent, Surrey, Hampshire, and Sussex.**wear, v.t.***Inf.* **stand for***Inf.* As in, *Oh no, he won't wear that!* said, for instance, by a lawyer to a client who suggests an outrageous proposal to be made to the other side. Also in the sense of 'permit, tolerate': When something slightly irregular, though patently more efficient, is suggested to a bureaucrat, he won't *wear* it for a minute; or meaning 'accept' or 'see' as in: *I just can't wear him as capable of doing that sort of thing*, when people are discussing an unsolved murder and someone suggests a suspect. See also **wash, v.i.****wear off****wear out**

Of clothes.

**weather-board, n.****clapboard**A *weather-boarded house* is a *clapboard house*, and *weather-boarding* is the *clapboard* itself, also known as *siding*. A *weather-board* is also a sloping board attached to the bottom of a door to keep out rain.**web lettuce****iceberg lettuce**See also **cos lettuce**.**wedge, n.***Slang.* **wad***Slang.* A *wedge* (of **notes**) is a *wad* (of *bills*). *Wedge* has thus come to mean 'money,' as in, "Got any *wedge*?" *Wodge* and *wadge* are variants. See also **lolly** for slang terms for money.**weed, n.***Slang.* **drip***Slang.* A pejorative, synonymous with **twit**, for a weak person.

... week

a week from ...

The British say *today week* or *a week today* where the Americans say *a week from today*; *Tuesday week* or *a week on Tuesday* where the Americans say *a week from Tuesday*; *last Sunday week* where Americans say *a week ago last Sunday*; and the same difference in usage applies to *fortnight*. See also **Appendix I.A.1**.

**weekday**. See **workday**.

**weepy**; **weepie**, *n.*, *slang*.

*Slang*. **tear jerker**

**weighting**, *n.*

**extra salary allowance**

A blanket upward adjustment to cover extra costs of living in certain areas. Under *London weighting*, e.g., government employees living in inner London, i.e., within four miles of Charing Cross, receive a certain increase, those in outer London a somewhat smaller increment, etc.

**weigh up**

*Inf.* **weigh**

*Inf.* The British *weigh up* a situation. The Americans drop the *up*. So do the British when they *weight their words*. See **Appendix I.A.3**.

**weir**, *n.*

**dam**

A *dam* or any fixed obstruction across a river or canal. The water so backed up is directed into a millstream or reservoir, with the excess going over the top of the *weir*, or via a movable sluice gate, or both. On canals, the *weir* is off to one side and the excess water runs down an incline into a reservoir.

**well away**, *Inf.*

**1. *Inf.* tipsy**

**2. *Inf.* off to a good start**

**2.** A term borrowed from horse-racing, having made considerable progress. At the outset of a long evening's drinking, one would qualify, it seems, in both senses.

**well bowled!**

*Inf.* **nice going!**

*Inf.* The cricket (rough) equivalent of a pitcher in baseball is the **bowler**, and, like the pitcher, he is a key figure. *Well bowled!* is a phrase borrowed from cricket which, especially in **public school** and university circles, is used to express approbation of accomplishments having nothing whatever to do with the game. Upper class and old-fashioned; synonymous with the more common **well done!** and **good show!** Cf. another cricket term, applied in its literal sense to fieldsmen (*fielders*): *Well stopped, Sir!* said to someone blocking an absurd proposal.

**well breeched**, *adj.*, *Inf.*

**well heeled**

**well cooked**

**well done**

A description of how you would like your meat. The British use *well done* also. It may be imagined that they would prefer *well cooked* in circumstances where it was important to avoid giving the waiter the impression that he was being complimented (see **well done!**).

**well done!**

*Inf.* **nice going!**

*Inf.* Expressing commendation. *Attaboy!* is not often heard in Britain.

**Welliboots**, *n. pl.**Slang.* Variant of **Wellingtons**.**rubber boots****wellies.** See **Wellingtons**.**Wellingtons**, *n. pl.*See also **boot**; **snowboots**; **galoshes**; **Welliboots**; **wellies**.**rubber boots****West Country**

SEE COMMENT

This term applies to the southwestern counties, Cornwall, Devon, Gloucestershire, etc. Englishmen never come from *the west* or have relatives or go on vacations *out west*, but rather in the *West Country*, and have a *West Country*, rather than a *western* accent. Same goes for *North Country*, but not the South or the East. They also speak of the *North of England* and the *South of England* (and use *West-of-England* as an adjective), but never the East of England.

**West End**

1. SEE COMMENT

2. *approx.* **Broadway**

1. The shopping and theater center of London.

2. Used figuratively (like *Broadway*) to mean 'the theater,' as in *the West End season*. But the term is also used in a more general way to denote the way of life characterized by theater-going, restaurant-dining, and parties. The term *Fringe Theatre* bears the same relationship to *West End* as *Off Broadway* does to *Broadway*, in the theater world.

**wet**, *adj.**Slang.* **dumb**

*Slang.* Both countries use the scornful terms *drip* and *wet behind the ears*. In Britain, *wet* is sometimes used as a noun, synonymous with *dumbbell*.

**wet fish****fresh fish**

Sign in a fish-and-chips luncheon place that also functions as a fish store: OPEN FOR WET FISH 9.00 A.M. TO 3.00 P.M. ONLY. For the periods rather than colons in expressions of time, see **Appendix I.D.4**.

**whack**, *n.*1. *Slang.* **gob**2. *Slang.* **stretch**3. **share**1. *Slang.* A big *whack* of something is a *gob* of it, i.e., a large hunk.2. *Slang.* Prison term.

3. *Slang.* To *pay your whack* is to *chip in*, as when the class buys the teacher a Christmas gift. For British use of *chip in*, see **chip in**.

**whacked***Inf.* **done in**; **beat***Inf.* To be *whacked*, or *whacked to the wide*, is to be *beat*, *pooped*, etc. See **to the wide**.**whacko!** *Interj.**Inf.* **great!**

An expression of great satisfaction and joy.

**whale**, *n.**Slang.* **shark**

*Slang.* An American who is expert in a given field is said to be a *shark* at it. A Briton so skilled might be called a *whale on*, *at* or *for* it. There is an echo of the British usage in the expression *a whale of a . . .* Thus Jones is a *shark at math* in

America, a *whale on, at or for maths* in Britain, and a *whale of a mathematician* anywhere. For prepositional usages, see **Appendix I.A.1.**

**wharf**, *n.*

**dock**

See **dock** for British use of the word.

**what?**

**no?**

*Inf.* At the end of a sentence expecting the answer *yes*, where Americans would say, *Isn't he?* or *Aren't they?* etc. Example: "*He's a clumsy chap, what?*" Now outdated.

**what's the drill?**

**what's the ticket?**

*Inf.* In the sense of 'what is to be done?' *Drill*, apart from its ordinary meaning in the services, is a military term signifying tactics worked out in advance so that everyone knows what to do in a given situation despite the stress of battle. From this background, *What's the drill?* developed the more general meaning 'What is the (proper) procedure?' For example: *What's the drill for getting reservations?* On leaving a restaurant where one has a charge account and usually leaves a 15 percent tip, one might get a nod from the *maître d'* who regularly murmurs, *The usual drill, sir?* meaning, *Do I charge this to your account, adding the usual 15 percent tip?*

**wheeled chair**

**wheelchair**

Usually called a **bath chair** or **invalid's chair** in Britain. See **Appendix I.A.3.**

**wheeze**, *n.*

**idea; scheme**

*Slang.* *Idea* in the sense of *expedient*, as in, *It would be a good wheeze to get an early start.*

**When-I**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Many Britons, now retired, have spent much of their lives in far-flung places, usually in what used to be the Empire and is now what is left of the Commonwealth. They like to reminisce, and these oral memoirs almost invariably begin, *When I was in Singapore . . . , When I was in Bombay . . . , When I was in Hong Kong . . . ,* etc. A number of these retired gentlemen live in tax-haven parts of the United Kingdom, where the term *When-I* is in current use to describe members of this group fortunate enough to find an audience. An American expression with similar connotations is *Way back when . . .*

**when it comes to the bone**, *Inf.*

*Inf.* **when you come right down to it**

**Where do we go for honey?**

**Where do we go from here?**

*Inf.* *What's the next step?* (e.g., in an investigation). Its meaning varies with the objective. In bridge, for example, it would mean *How shall I go about playing this hand?*

**where the shoe pinches**, *Inf.*

**where the difficulty or hardship lies**

**Whig**, *n.*

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Historically, a member of the political party that was the predecessor of the Liberal Party. It was composed of the aristocratic oligarchy. It is used informally today as a label for one who has faith in progress. Cf. **Tory**.

**whilst, conj.****while**

Now used less frequently than *while* in Britain. See also **amongst**.

**whin, n.****thorny shrub**

Any prickly shrub.

**whinge, v.i.****whine**

*Slang*. To bewail one's fate, gripe, complain.

**whip-round, n.****1. Inf. passing the hat****2. quick tour**

1. *Inf.* A collection taken up, usually, for the purpose of purchasing a gift for someone. Note sent around in a factory: 'Jennifer Whalen is getting married next Saturday. There will be a *whip-round* next week to buy her a wedding present.' Also used of a collection in a pub to pay for the next round of drinks.

2. *Inf.* A hurried sightseeing of a place like a museum, a palace, a city, a section of the country. *Let's have a whip-round of Parliament Square*. Or used verbally, as in *We whipped round Bloomsbury*.

**whisky, n.****Scotch**

*Whisky* (no *e* in Britain) is the term for *Scotch whiskey*. There is an *e* in Irish *whiskey*. *Whiskey*, in America, must be qualified, to distinguish between Scotch and rye, which, like bourbon, is little drunk in Britain. Bourbon, however, is increasingly found in Britain's pubs and hotel bars. If you ask for 'whisky,' you get Scotch.

**whispering cake.** See under **schoolboy cake**.

**Whit, adj.****Pentecostal**

*Whit* is short for *Whitsun*, which means 'Whit Sunday,' the seventh Sunday after Easter. It used to be followed by a **bank holiday** known as *Whit Monday*, which has been transferred to an early summer date independent of the religious calendar.

**whitebait, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Very small silvery fish, usually sprat, sometimes young herring, fried whole in batter as caught, without being cleaned. Served in large quantities and extremely tasty.

**white feather**

SEE COMMENT

*Slang*. During the Boer War, "patriotic" ladies presented white feathers to young men not in uniform. The taunt of cowardice was expected to shame them into enlisting. This practice was revived during World War I. To *show the white feather* means to 'betray cowardice.'

**white fish**

SEE COMMENT

Generic term for light-colored sea fish, for example, haddock and cod. In America it refers to any one of several distinct freshwater species, written as one word.

**Whitehall, n.***approx. Inf.* **Washington (the government)**

*Inf.* The government, so-called because many government offices are located on *Whitehall*, a London street between Trafalgar Square and the Houses of Parliament. See also **Number 10 Downing Street**.

**White Paper.** See **Paper.**

**white spirit**

**methyl alcohol**

Or denatured, for uses other than drinking.

**white wax**

**paraffin**

In Britain **paraffin** is the material Americans call *kerosene*.

**wholemeal bread**

**whole wheat bread**

**W.I.**

SEE COMMENT

Stands for *Women's Institute*, a national women's club with local branches doing charitable work.

**wick, get on someone's.** See **get on (someone's) wick.**

**wicket, n.**

*approx. situation*

*Inf.* In cricket, *wicket* has two distinct technical meanings:

1. A set of three vertical *stumps* on which rest two horizontal bails that the **batsman** defends against the **bowler**.
2. The space between the two sets of stumps and bails over which batsmen run to score points. See also **cricket**; **Test Match**; **sticky wicket**.

**widdershins.** See **withershins**

**wide boy**

*Slang.* **sharpie**

*Slang.* Shady character.

**wide, to the.** See **to the wide**

**wife-battering**

**domestic abuse**

The American euphemism covers **child-battering** and *child abuse* as well.

**wifey, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Sometimes *wifie*, occasionally *wify*, a term of endearment for one's wife; but often, especially in Scotland, it appears in the expression *old wifey*, used jocularly and the least bit pejoratively, to describe a somewhat addled woman beyond her first flush of youth.

**Wigan, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* A small manufacturing town in South Lancashire, population about 80,000; used figuratively in music hall patter as a prototype of small city architectural horror and cultural provinciality. To *come from Wigan* is to be a *small town hick*, like one's aunt in Dubuque.

**wigging, n.**

*Inf.* **dressing-down**

*Inf.* To give somebody a *wigging* is to give that person *hell*. *Wig* is a transitive verb in both countries and means 'rebuke.' Its use as a verb is rare and it is usually found in the substantive form *wigging*.

**Wimpy, n.**

**hamburger**

*Slang.* From *Wimpy*, the character in the *Popeye* comic strip, who could eat an infinite number of them. *Wimpy-Bar* is the name of a British fast-food chain of ham-

burger joints, but the term *wimpy* has remained generic. It is, however, giving way to *hamburger* and *beefburger*. The closest cousins of *Wimpy* are *White Castles* and the various Something Burgers.

**win**, *v.i.*

**succeed; gain**

*Inf.* In the sense of 'making progress,' 'getting there.' A gardener engaged in an unequal combat with weeds might say, "We're winning." In a transitive British use, *win* can mean 'gain' in the sense of 'obtain': through advanced methods of mining, a company can *win* a larger amount of coal from the coal face.

**wincey**, *n.*

**type of cloth**

Consisting of a mixture of cotton and wool, or wool alone. *Winceyette* is a more finely woven version used for shirts, nightgowns, and so on.

**wind**, *v.t.*

**crank**

Once in a while a Briton still has to *wind* his car, though *crank* is the more usual term. See also **starting handle** and **Appendix II.E**.

**wind**. See **get the wind up; have the wind up; put the wind up; raise the wind**.

**windcheater**, *n.*

**windbreaker**

The American form is gaining currency among Britons.

**winding point**

**turning-around place**

(The first *i* in *winding* is short, as in *WINDLASS*.) This is a canal term and denotes the place in a canal wide enough to permit a boat to turn around.

**windle**, *n.*

*approx.* 3 bushels

An agricultural measure, used for grain. See also **Appendix II.C.1.h**.

**window-gazing**, *n.*

**window shopping**

The American term is now coming into general use in Britain.

**windscreen**, *n.*

**windshield**

See also **Appendix II.E**.

**windy**, *adj.*, *Slang*.

1. flatulent

2. *Inf.* jumpy

**wine merchant's**

**liquor store**

**wing**, *n.*

**fender**

Automobile term; but **fender** in England is *bumper* in America. See **Appendix II.E**.

**wing commander**

**lieutenant colonel**

In the Royal Air Force. There are *wings* in the U.S. Air Force, too, but the commander of a U.S. wing is called a *lieutenant colonel*.

**winker**, *n.*

**directional signal; blinker**

*Slang.* Also *winking lamp*. On a truck, bus, or car, used to indicate an intended turn left or right.

**winkie**, *n.*

**weenie**

*Slang.* Children's slang for *penis*.

**winkle, n.**

Or any edible sea snail.

**periwinkle****winkle-pickers, n. pl.**

SEE COMMENT

*Slang. Pointed shoes:* the Americans seem not to have coined any slang to describe this sartorial extravagance.**winkle out, v.t.***Slang. squeeze out**Slang.* In both senses: for instance, to *winkle out* information by pumping a weak character previously sworn to secrecy, and to *winkle out* a rival by outmaneuvering him. To *winkle one's way out* of something is to *wriggle out* of it, and conversely to *winkle one's way in* is to *worm one's way in*.**win one's cap.** See **blue, n.;** **cap.****wipe off a score, Inf.***Inf. settle a score***wipe (someone's) eye***Inf. steal a march on (someone)**Slang.* And *get the better of him*.**wireless, n.****radio**

Going out of fashion now in favor of the American term.

**witch.** See **Appendix II.H.****with compliments.** See under **compliments slip.****withershins, widdershins, adv.****counterclockwise**It is said to be bad luck to walk around a church *withershins*, in a direction contrary to the apparent course of the sun.**within cooee (coo-ee) of****within hailing distance of***Slang.* Within easy reach of (something). *Cooee, coo-ee* or *cooey*, with the *ee* sound long drawn out, is a very old Australian hailing cry, which spread to England, or at least London, over a century ago as both noun and verb (to *cooee*, to *hail*). To be *within cooee* of something, then, is to be not very far from it.**within kicking distance of, Inf.****anywhere near**For example, *I never got within kicking distance of that class of jockey.***within the sound of Bow Bells.** See **Bow Bells.****with knobs on!***Slang. in spades!**Slang.* The same to you *with knobs on!* is said, especially by youngsters, in retorting to an insult. 'The same to you and more!'**with respect****with all due respect**In the sense of 'Excuse me, but . . .' Americans are careful to limit the degree of respect in accordance with the qualifications of the individual addressed, while the British diplomatically sidestep that issue by not modifying the noun, or go to the other extreme by saying 'with all respect.' When an Englishman begins his statement with the words *with respect*, you know very well that he disagrees with you entirely and is prepared to demolish your position.

**witness-box, n.**

In America one *takes the stand* or is *on the witness stand*. In Britain one *enters the witness-box* and is *in* it rather than *on* it because literally, one is in an enclosed *box* (save for the top).

**witness stand****wizard, adj.**

*Inf. terrific*  
*Slang.* Synonymous with **smashing**. World War II slang in the R.A.F., usually applied to a successful mission.

**wog, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Slang.* A *wog* originally was an offensive term for an 'Arab.' Now it has been extended to include Mediterranean types and other dark-skinned foreigners.

**wonky, adj., Slang.**

Shaky, groggy. Also unreliable.

*Inf. wobbly***won't go**

Example: *Putting Jones in charge of that department just won't go.* Americans would be apt to say, *'Putting Jones in charge is a no-no.'*

**won't work out****wooden house****frame house****wooden spoon***Inf. booby prize*

*Inf.* Derived from the custom, originated at Cambridge, of awarding a *wooden spoon* to the student who came out last in the mathematics **trips**, a custom that spread to other universities and was applied in other fields.

**wood-wool****excelsior**

The British name has nothing to do with sheep. Shavings of pine and other woods were used for surgical dressing and for packing.

**Woollies, n.****F. W. Woolworth & Co.**

*Inf.* A joke name, like *Marks & Sparks* for Marks & Spencer; for a company no longer in business in America.

**woolly, n.****sweater**

*Inf.* A woolen garment, especially an undergarment. Americans do not speak of a *woolly* but do use *woolies* to mean 'heavy underwear.' See also **jumper; jersey**.

**woolsack, n.**

SEE COMMENT

Seat or divan in the House of Lords for the **Lord Chancellor**. It is stuffed with wool and covered with red baize.

**word-spinning, n.**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* There is no one precise sense in which this expression is used. *Spinning* connotes an endless production of words, and is usually used pejoratively to describe written or verbal verbosity. It can, however, mean 'word play'—using words in novel ways and combinations, in the manner of Joy or Shakespeare.

**workday, n.****weekday**

Interchangeable in Britain with *weekday*. Where an American would use the expression *workday*, the British would say *working day*. It is worth noting that *weekdays* in rail and bus timetables includes *Saturday*.

**workhouse, n.**

Originally a charitable home for the poor, where the able-bodied were given work to do, and tramps could stay for the night in exchange for odd jobs about the place, this institution and the term itself are now obsolete, and the usual term is **almshouse** or *old people's home*, many of which have been converted into apartments for senior citizens who pay nominal rent. See **almshouse**. In America a *workhouse* is a jail for petty criminals. No such meaning ever attached to the word in Britain.

**poorhouse****working party, n.**

An informal group, typically of middle-rank officials, i.e., civil servants, to whom a government official or body refers a question for study and report. Usually, as the term suggests, it is less grand than a committee set up by a **minister** or Parliament. Cf. **Royal Commission**.

*approx. committee***works, n. pl.****1. factory****2. machinery****3. operations**

A tractor *works* is a tractor *factory*. But the roadside sign ROAD WORKS means 'Men Working'; *sewage works* means a 'sewage system'; and a *spanner in the works* is a *monkey wrench in the machinery*. A *works convener* is a factory union official who *convenes workers' meetings*. Sometimes spelled *convenor*. *Ex-works* means 'from the factory.'

**work to rule**

Describing what a union does when it takes advantage of the rule book technicalities to cause a slowdown. A slowdown is form of protest, like a *job action*, short of a strike. See **industrial action**.

**work by the book****work to time, Inf.***Inf. watch the clock***worrying, adj.****troubling****worth a good deal of anybody's time***Inf. a good sort*

*Inf.* A highly complimentary description of a person. See also **have no time for**.

**wotcher!** See **watcher**.

**wowser, n.****fanatic puritan; spoilsport; teetotaler**

*Slang*. (Pronounced WOWZER.) A puritanical type, intent on improving the morals of the community. Also called a *Mrs. Grundy*, from which is derived the word *Grundyism*, synonymous with prudery. Originally Australian, wowser's meaning has tended to narrow to 'teetotaler.'

**WRAC****Women's Royal Army Corps****wrangler, n.****mathematics honor graduate**

Formerly, at Cambridge University, the Senior Wrangler was the top man. From a sense of *wrangle*: to 'dispute.'

**wrap in cotton wool**

*Inf.* **Cotton wool** is *absorbent cotton*. See also **live in cotton wool**.

**spoil; coddle****wrap up!**, *Slang*.

For synonyms see **belt up!**

**shut up!****Wren**, *n.*

*Inf.* A member of the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS).

**Wave****write (someone) down as**

*Inf.* As in, *When she heard his reaction to the strike, she wrote him down as another arm-chair reformer*. An approximate informal American equivalent is to *label (someone) as*.

**consider (someone) to be****writing down**

Tax terminology.

**depreciation****writ large**

1. As in, *He saw the end of his dreams writ large in the new policy*.
2. As in, *His suggestion was no more than the old policy writ large*.

**1. (made) obvious****2. on a grand scale**

**WRNS.** See **Wren**.

**(get hold of the) wrong end of the stick**

*Inf.* With the implication that one hasn't got the facts of the case. Sometimes *have* instead of *get*, and sometimes *hold of* is omitted.

**miss the point**

# Y, Z

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**(the) Yard**

SEE COMMENT

*Inf.* Scotland Yard.**year dot***Inf.* **year one***Inf.* Usually in the phrase, *Since the year dot*, meaning ‘for ages.’ See also **moons**; **donkey’s years**.**years, donkey’s.** See **donkey’s years**.**yield to redemption****yield to maturity**

Financial language, describing a bond selling at a discount.

**yell pen and ink***Slang.* **yell blue murder***Slang.* *Pen and ink* is cockney rhyming slang (see **Appendix II.G.3.**) for *stink*. To *yell pen and ink* is to *raise a stink, create an awful fuss, go into hysterics* and indulge in similar types of unpleasant activities.**yeoman, n.****1. small farmer****2. SEE COMMENT****3. SEE COMMENT****1.** Who cultivates his own land.**2.** Member of the *yeomanry*, a volunteer cavalry force.**3.** *Beefeater*; informal for *yeoman of the guard* (see **beefeater**).As an adjective, *yeoman* is seen almost exclusively in ‘*yeoman service*,’ meaning ‘useful help in need.’**yobbo, n.***Slang.* **lout; bum***Slang.* An extension of *yob*, **back slang** for *boy*.**yonks****ages***Slang.* A long time, as in “I haven’t seen her for yonks.” Much more expressive in Britain than in the United States.**Z-car, n.****police car**(Pronounced, of course, ZED-CAR.) See also **jam sandwich**; **panda car**.**zebra, n.****pedestrian crossing***Inf.* Sometimes *zebra crossing*. A passage across the road, marked with zebra-like stripes. The *e* is either long or short. Once a pedestrian sets foot on a *zebra*, traffic must stop to let him or her cross. See also **pelican crossing** and **belisha beacon**.

**zed**, *n.***letter z****zip**, *n.*Also given as *zip-fastener*.**zipper****zizz**, *n., v.i., Slang.**Slang.* **snooze**

# APPENDICES

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[See Contents, page vii, for outline]

## APPENDIX I

GENERAL DIFFERENCES  
BETWEEN BRITISH  
AND AMERICAN  
ENGLISH

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## A. Syntax

1. There are many differences between British and American use of prepositions. This is especially true of the prepositions *in* and *on*. Britons live *in* rather than *on* such and such a street (although they do live *on* a road). In Britain animals are *on* heat rather than *in* heat. The British say that predictable events are *on* the cards rather than *in* the cards. Athletes in Britain are *on* form rather than *in* form. Things that are on the way, in a stage of development, are described in Britain as *on* train as well as *in* train.

*Different from* is heard in Britain but *different to* is more commonly heard, and *other to*, although not frequently met with, is sometimes used where Americans would say *other than*. This usage, incidentally, in both countries may have arisen from the mistaken belief that the ending *-er* in *other* indicated a comparative, and thus gave rise to the apparent solecism *different than*.

Nervous *of* (doing something) for nervous *about*, the advantage *of* for the advantage *over*, an increase *on* rather than an increase *over*, frontage *to* instead of frontage *on*, *by* auction for *at* auction, membership *of* for membership *in* (but one is a member *of*, rather than a member *in* an organization in America as well as Britain), dry *off* for dry *out*, chat *to* for chat *with*, cater *for* rather than cater *to* (in the sense of 'kowitz' or 'pander to'), but sit *to* (in the sense of 'pose') rather than sit *for*, snowed *up* for snowed *in*, haven't seen him *in* rather than *for* six months, Monday *to* Friday (inclusive) for Monday *through* Friday, a week *on* Tuesday (or Tuesday week) instead of a week *from* Tuesday, mad or crazy *on* rather than *about*, *in* the circumstances rather than *under* them, visit *of* London for visit *to* London, infatuated *by*, not *with*, audience *of* the Pope rather than *with* him, the laugh *of* him for the laugh *on* him, liability *to*, not *for* (e.g.) income tax, special charges, etc., a study *of* rather than *in* (e.g.) courage (where *study* is used in the sense of *striking example*), something *on* rather than *along* those lines—these are all further examples. The verb *to notify* presents a special situation, involving something more than a difference in preposition usage. Americans notify someone *of* something. In Britain, one can notify something *to* someone. The subject matter, rather than the person notified, becomes the object of *notify*, thus: 'Please notify any change of address to your local post office.' Some authorities say this is substandard in Britain. It is unthinkable in American English.

2. Usage also differs between the two countries in the matter of the definite article. Sometimes the British leave the article out where Americans put it in. Thus, in Britain, you are *in hospital* or go to *hospital*; and if things are against you, you are *down at heel*. Americans *put on the dog*; Britons *put on dog* (or *put on side*). Sometimes they put it in where we leave it out. Americans, in formal documents, use the term *said* (without the article) as well as *the said* meaning 'aforementioned,' but in Britain the article is mandatory. Thus, a Briton will have *the gift of the gab*, or will visit a shop on *the High Street*; and he or she will call an unidentified person *someone or the other*. **Ministers** (*cabinet members*) are referred to, for example, as *The Foreign Secretary*, *Lord*, *Sir* or *Mr So-and-so*, or *The American Secretary of State*, *Mr So-and-So*; never (as in America) *Foreign Minister Lord*, *Sir* or *Mr So-and-So* or *Secretary of State So-and-So*, without benefit of the definite article. Sometimes the British use a definite article when we are content with the indefinite one. Thus, Britons go on *the spree* instead of on a spree, take *the rise* out of, not get a rise out of, someone, and something will cost forty pounds the painting rather than forty pounds a painting. They use both a *hell of a time* and *the hell of a time*, either of which can mean a 'terribly good time' or a 'terribly bad time,' depending on the context and the emphasis: *a hell of a time* usually means a 'rough time' and *the hell of a time* generally means a 'good time.' On occasion the *the* is not omitted but replaced by a possessive pronoun. Thus, *half his time he doesn't know what he is doing*. There is one instance, at least, where the British use the indefinite article in a way that seems peculiar to Americans. Both countries use the term *nonsense* in the same way, but the British also use the expression *a nonsense* in the sense of an 'absurdity,' i.e., a 'piece of absurd behavior,' a *fiasco*, a *muddle*, a *snafu*.

3. The British tend to lengthen the first word of many compound nouns, particularly by adding the ending *-ing*. Thus sailing-boat, rowing-boat, dialling-code or tone, banking account, washing day, washing-basin, dancing-hall, sparking-plug, marketing research. This happens occasionally to single nouns as well: turning for *turn*, and parting for a *part* in your hair. Other examples are found in departmental store, cookery book, and highly-strung. A similar practice is the adding of *-s* in such Britishisms as barber's shop, tailor's shop, doll's house (any little girl's, not only the Ibsen variety), etc. *Innings* has an *-s* in the singular as well as the plural. There is a tendency often to pluralize, as in brains trust, overheads, removals (the moving business), insurances (as in 'Insurances Arranged' on insurance brokers' letterheads). An *-ed* is often added, as in the stockinged feet, iced water, closed company for *close corporation* (in this case the British prefer the participial adjective to the noun phrase), wheeled chair, twin-bedded room, winged collar, but *two-room flat* (note absence of *-ed* in *room*), the distinction here being that the *-ed* is used to indicate 'furnished with' but omitted where the concept is 'consisting of.' In the field of music, the British don't sharp and flat notes: they sharpen and flatten them; and a music box is a musical box. Note, too, the British insistence on adding an object in certain expressions where the American usage is content with the verb alone: to *move house*, to *shower oneself*, although the object of the verb is occasionally omitted. Also note *pour with rain*. However, watch out: sometimes they do the shortening, as in *swing door* for *swinging-door*, *sunk garden* for *sunken garden*, *spring-clean* for *spring cleaning*, *long-play* for *long-playing* (record), *punch-bag* for *punching bag*, *drive* for *driveway*.

4. A singular noun that describes an institution like a university or a political body is followed by a verb in the third person singular in America, third person plural in Britain. Thus, Harvard *plays* Yale, but Oxford *play* Cambridge; the American cabinet *meets*, the British cabinet *meet*; the American public *approves*, the British public *approve*. A headline in the *Daily Telegraph* (London) of August 15,

1981, about England's rout of the Australian side in the fifth **Test Match**, reads: *Australia Crash Again as England Seize Control*.

On the subject of singular nouns followed by plural verbs, see the list in Marckwardt's *American English* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1958), Chapter 4, p. 77. He says that an American would be "downright startled, to see a sports headline reading 'JESUS ROW TO EASY VICTORY.'" (*Jesus* is the name of an Oxford college, and there is a *Jesus* at Cambridge as well). The British often use *look like* followed by a gerund rather than *look as if* or *look as though* followed by a subject and verb: *He never looked like being troubled* rather than . . . *as if he were in trouble*, or, *He looks like being successful in whatever he tries* instead of *He looks as if he would be successful* . . . One another incorrectly takes the place of *each other* in Britain when only two persons or things are involved: *Britain and America should treat one another as members of one family*.

5. *Who* has become an acceptable British informal form of *whom*. On the other hand the objective case is used, informally but almost universally, for predicate nominative pronouns as in, *It's me*; *She's taller than him*, usages popular in America only in less educated circles. But getting back to *who*, the British often use it as a relative pronoun where Americans would use *which* or *that*: *the companies who pay well*, *the colleges who admit women*.

## B. Pronunciation

1. The spoken language in London and other parts of Britain is often difficult for Americans. There is the matter of intonation generally, and there is a problem with vowels (the broad *a* and the short *o*, which is somewhere between the *o*'s in NOT and NOTE) and the diphthongs AE and OE, which are pronounced like a long E (as in EQUAL) in Britain and a short E (as in GET) in America. Thus, the diphthongs in *oecumenical* and *oedema*, which are variants of *ecumenical* and *edema* in American English spelling, are pronounced EE in Britain and EH in America. The same is true with the second syllable of *anaesthetist* and names like *Aeschylus* and *Aesculapius*, in which the diphthong is not shortened in American spelling, as in the Greek-derived type of word mentioned above. The *time of day* becomes TOYM OF DIE in England's Kent and Sussex; *roundabout* (a 'traffic circle' or 'merry-go-round') comes out RAYNDABAYT in those counties; and so it goes. In an amusing article ("Gaffes in Gilead," *The New York Times*, May 12, 1971), Gertrude M. Miller, a BBC pronunciation specialist, listed some horrendous examples, some of which are:

### Place-Names

Written:	Pronounced:
<i>Prinknash</i>	PRINNJI
<i>Culzean</i>	K'LANE
<i>Caius</i> (a Cambridge college)	KEEZ
<i>Magdalen</i> (an Oxford college)	MAWDLIN
<i>Magdalene</i> (a Cambridge college)	MAWDLIN
<i>Belvoir</i>	BEEVER
<i>Wemyss</i>	WEEMZ
<i>Kirkcudbright</i>	KIR-KOO'-BRI
<i>Dalziel</i>	DEE-ELL'

### Some notable omissions are:

Written:	Pronounced:
<i>Wrotham</i>	ROOT'M (OO as in BOOT)
<i>Lymgne</i>	LIMM

Derby  
Hertford  
Berkshire  
Thames  
Pall Mall  
Marylebone  
Beauchamp  
Warwick  
Marlborough

DARBY  
HARFORD  
BARKSHUH  
TEMZ  
PELL MELL OR PAL MAL  
MARL'B'N  
BEECH'M  
WORRICK  
MAWL'-BRUH

### Family Names

#### Written:

Ruthven  
Leveson-Gower  
Menzies  
Cholmondeley  
St. John  
Featherstonehaugh  
Cokes  
Mainwaring  
Home

#### Pronounced:

RIV'N  
LOOS-N-GOR  
MING-ISS OR MINJIES  
CHUMLEY  
SIN-J'N  
FANSHAW  
COOKS  
MANNERING  
HUME (HYUME)

Note: The Australian statesman and the London stationer's are pronounced *Menzies* as spelled; the *-ng-* in *Mingiss* is sounded as in *singer*.

Caution: To the surprise of some Americans, there are place names that are pronounced the way they are spelled, like Hampstead (pronounced HAMPSTED, not HEMPSTID); Berkhamstead (pronounced BURKHAM'-STED not BURK'-IMSTID); Cirencester (pronounced SIRENSESTER, not half-swallowed like *Worcester*, *Gloucester*, etc.).

A special note on a few representative county abbreviations (there are many more, and county names are occasionally changed as counties are realigned, eliminated, merged, and renamed for purposes of greater administrative efficiency):

<i>Bucks.</i>	Buckinghamshire
<i>Hants.</i>	Hampshire
<i>Lancs.</i>	Lancashire
<i>Wilts.</i>	Wiltshire

These are Standard English if so written (and analogous to abbreviated American state names), and informal when so pronounced. *Bucks.*, *Hants.*, etc., in the spoken language are as confusing to Americans as *Mass.* is to a Briton.

For a full treatment of this subject, see the *BBC Pronouncing Dictionary of British Names* (Oxford University Press, Ely House, London, 1971), by G. M. Miller. Walter Henry Nelson, in Chapter V of his admirable *The Londoners* (Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., London, 1975) has some interesting things to say about the mysteries of British pronunciation of their place names, and refers to Alistair Morrison's most amusing treatment of the pronunciation eccentricities of the denizens or habitués of London's chic West End, in *Fraffly Well Spoken* (Wolfe Publishing Ltd., London, 1968), where Berkeley Square (normally pronounced BARKLY, or more exactly, BARKLIH) becomes BOGGLEY and the British Empire comes out BRISHEMPAH. But these elisions and truncations are not confined to the West End, as any American making a telephone call through a British operator can testify after unraveling the arcana of *trangneckchew*, the solicitous operator's oft-repeated assurance that she is *trying-to-connect-you*.

2. Not only place and family names present difficulty. Many common nouns are normally accented or pronounced differently from the usual American way. Here are a few:

**Accent only:** *coroll'ary*, *labo'ratory*, *metall'-urgy*, *contro'versy* (the last two also as in America).

Written:	Pronounced:
<i>ate</i>	ETT
<i>clerk</i>	CLARK
<i>figure</i>	FIGGER
<i>herb</i>	sounding the H
<i>lieutenant</i>	LEFTENANT (army); LEHTENANT (navy)
<i>missile</i>	second i rhymes with EYE
<i>privacy</i>	i as in PRIVY
<i>schedule</i>	SCHEDULE
<i>solder</i>	sounding the l
<i>suggest</i>	SUJEST
<i>vitamin</i>	i as in BIT

*Ate*, *privacy* and *vitamin* are also, though not often, pronounced the American way.

The British tend to accent the first syllable of certain words of French origin, where American speech normally refrains from doing so: e.g., *ballet*, *brochure*, *café*, *garage*, *valet*, and the name *Maurice*. In words of three syllables, like *consommé* and *résumé*, they often offend American ears by accenting the *second* syllable: CON SOMM'EE, RAY ZOOM' EE! Differences in the pronunciation of Latin are another matter and of insufficient general interest to go into here. For enlightening discussion of the general area of pronunciation differences, see Marckwardt, *American English* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1958), Chapter 4, pp. 69–75, and Stevens, *British and American English* (Collier-Macmillan Publishers, London, 1972), Chapter 6.

## C. Spoken Usage and Figures of Speech

1. Certain usages in the spoken language are foreign to Americans. The telephone rings and the Briton may ask, *Who is that?* never, *Who's this?* Or he may ask, *Is that* (not *this*) *Bob Cox?* An example of this usage is seen in *An Improbable Fiction*, by Sara Woods (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, N.Y. 1971). The English amateur detective says: "... It seemed obvious that the [telephone] caller was an American ... I never knew an Englishman to say, 'Is *this* Miss Edison speaking?'" An Englishman would have used *that*, not *this*. Another British habit is the use of a question to make a statement. Thus, a man who happens to be illiterate, having ignored a printed notice, is called to account and asks (says, really), *Now, I can't read, can I?* Or Little Johnny, signaled by his impatient mother to hurry home, asks (says, really), *I'm coming home, aren't I?* Or a person who has slept through an incident he might have observed if awake, asked about it by a police officer, replies, *Now, I was kipping [napping], wasn't I?* None of these so-called questions implies that the listener knows the answer, nor does the speaker expect one. They are simply statements put in this form for emphasis. And the interrogative form is often used for purposes of delicacy, to underplay a statement: *You've come a long way, haven't you? It's not too difficult, is it?* And often in a shop the salesperson (*shop assistant*), with some knitting of brows, itemizes and tots up your bill, usually mumbling the words and figures with hardly more than a slight movement of lips, and then turns to you brightly and announces the result with eyes opened wide and a rising intonation, as though indicating surprise and apology for the unpleasant tidings. This happens frequently all over Britain.

2. *Do* and *done* keep popping up in Britain in situations where they would be omitted in America. If you ask a British friend whether he thinks Charles has mailed your letters and he is not sure, he will answer, *He may have done*. An American would have said, *He may have*. If you said to a Briton: *Walking two miles before breakfast makes a fellow feel good*, he might reply, *Judging from your rosy cheeks, it must do*. An American would have left out the *do*.

3. American usage tends to be more literal. We say *baby carriage* and the British say *pram* (an abbreviation of *perambulator*). The British would understand *baby carriage* but no recently arrived American would know what a pram was. The same would apply to *cleaning woman* and *char*, or *ball-point pen* and *biro*. There is no hard and fast rule. In general, American expressions are easier for Britons than the other way around. On the other hand, British usage is sometimes more direct: *Cripples' Crossing* (a street sign), where Americans might have preferred the gentler term *Disabled*; *Limb Fitting Centre* (rather than, perhaps, *Prosthetic Devices?*); *Royal Hospital and Home for Incurables* (would Americans resort to a euphemism like *Chronic?*); *Hospital for Sick Children* (Americans would call it *Children's Hospital*, or, less simply, *Pediatric Hospital*); a London charity that sells Christmas cards painted by armless artists, and calls itself, in words sparse but graphic, *Mouth and Foot Painting Artists, Ltd.*

4. Inherent in many units of measure are figurative connotations which exist alongside their scientific functions. Despite the adoption of the metric system in the English-speaking countries, to their citizens things will inch, not centimeter, along; a miss will remain as good as a mile, not 1.609 kilometers; a ton of something will create an image which its metric equivalent won't; 90°F will be a sizzler, while 32.2°C won't alarm anyone. A similar British-American image dichotomy exists in the case of some units. No matter how often an American tells himself a stone (applied to human beings) is 14 lbs., 15 stone does not evoke for him the image of a fat person; and even *a few hundred yards yonder* creates only a fuzzy notion compared with *about a quarter of a mile down the road*. (See also **Appendix II.C.**)

5. In money matters, before decimalization, percentages were often expressed in terms of so-and-so many *shillings in the pound*. Income-tax rates were always so expressed. Since there were 20 shillings to a pound, 40 percent would be expressed as *8 shillings in the pound*. Although old shillings are no longer circulating, this usage will undoubtedly linger for a time (See also **Appendix II.A.**)

6. For the subtleties of variations in the vocabulary of spoken and written British English based on class distinctions, the reader is referred to "U and Non-U, an Essay in Sociological Linguistics," by Prof. Alan S. C. Ross, of Birmingham University (England), which appeared in *Noblesse Oblige*, a collection of articles edited by Nancy Mitford (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1956; Penguin Books Ltd., 1959). His article was commented on by Miss Mitford in *Encounter*, in a piece entitled "The English Aristocracy." She in turn was answered, in *Encounter*, by Evelyn Waugh in "an Open Letter to the Honorable Mrs. Peter Rodd (Nancy Mitford) On a Very Serious Subject." The Mitford and Waugh articles, too, are included in *Noblesse Oblige*. All these comments gave currency to the concept of U and Non-U as linguistic categories constituting "class-indicators." They were followed by Ross's *What are U?* (André Deutsch, Ltd., London, 1969) and *U and Non-U Revisited*, a collection of essays by various authors, edited by Richard Buckle (Debrett's Peerage, Ltd., London, 1978).

## D. Punctuation and Style

1. Punctuation in the two countries differs in many respects. The British use the hyphen more frequently than the Americans. *No-one* is a conspicuous case in point, although the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* recommends *no one*. *Loop-hole* and *mast-head* are other examples of this practice. Fowler wrote in 1926, "In America they are less squeamish than we are, and do not shrink from such forms as *coattails* and *aftereffects*." The British still shrink, though *loophole* is now permissible.
2. Parentheses, which they call *brackets* or *round brackets*, are in evidence in company names to designate a particular region or field of activity, like *E.W. Ratcliffe (Timer Merchants) Ltd.*; *Samuel Thompson (Manchester) Ltd.* This is a useful practice in putting the public on notice and avoiding confusion.
3. The British often use single quotation marks (*inverted commas*) outside the quoted matter and double ones inside; thus, John said, 'Henry told me he had heard Joseph say, "I won't go to school today"'. American usage puts the period (which the British call *full stop*), comma or other mark inside the final quotation mark: John said, "I told him not to worry," and then left. The comma would follow the final quotation mark in Britain: "... not to worry", and then left.
4. In telling time, the period, rather than the colon, is used between the hour numeral and the minutes: 6.30 rather than 6:30. When the minutes involved are less than ten, the zero before the digit is omitted: 9.5 rather than 9.05. And while we are speaking of expressions of time, it might be well to note the usage, on invitations, of expressions like 6.30 for 7.15, which means "Dinner will be served at about 7.15, but come as soon as you can after 6.30 for sherry or cocktails." It is good form to arrive any time between 6.30 and just before 7.15.
5. When dates are expressed in figures, the British follow the European method of day, month, year: thus, 10/27/00 becomes 27/10/00. *Next* often follows the name of the day in the expression of future time, as in, *See you Monday next*. In America it would be *next Monday*.
6. The period is usually omitted in *Mr, Mrs, Messrs, Dr*, but used in such abbreviations as *Prof., Rev., Hon.*, the rule appearing to be to use it where the abbreviation is simply a shortening of the word but to leave it out where the abbreviation consists of omitting letters from the middle of the word, as in *M(iste)r, D(octo)r*. However, it does appear in *St.*, the abbreviation of *Saint*.
7. *Mr* is the title of the common man in both countries. *Mr*, not *Dr*, is also the title of a surgeon or dentist, although Jones, your family physician, is *Dr* Jones. Correspondence that would be addressed to *Mr. John Smith* in America is usually addressed to John Smith, *Esq.* (with a period) in Britain, a quaint practice followed in America only in communications between lawyers. *Junior* (abbreviated to *Jr.*) and *II, III, IV*, etc. following the names of persons in line of descent all bearing the same name are omitted in Britain. One would not address a letter to William A. Jones, Jr. or Samuel B. Smith II, as the case might be. In ordinary speech, if one were to mention a forthcoming visit to Fred Brown (there being a father and son of the same name), the listener might ask, "Senior or Junior?" But in correspondence, or in a formal listing such as a telephone directory, membership list and the like, the *Jr.* and Roman numerals are omitted.
8. In the names of rivers, the British put the word *River* first, the Americans last: *the River Thames*, *the Mississippi River*. The word *River* can of course be omitted in both countries.

9. Abbreviations are common in informal British correspondence. Some, but not all, have been included in the alphabetical listing. Some common ones are:

<i>circs.</i>	circumstances
<i>hosp.</i>	hospital
<i>op.</i>	operation
<i>prb.</i>	probably
<i>s.a.e.</i>	self-addressed envelope
<i>s.a.p.</i>	soon as possible
<i>p.t.o.</i>	please turn (the page) over
<i>v.</i>	very
<i>w.</i>	with
<i>w/e</i>	weekend

People's names are often abbreviated. A Briton in a hurry might write you that M. had been down for the w/e w. N. and would prb. return the favour soon, unless the circs. changed because N. had to go into hosp. for a v. minor op. s.a.p.

For the abbreviation of county names, see **Appendix I.B.1.**

## E. Spelling

Spelling differences between the two countries fall into two main categories: word formation groups and individual words. Typical word ending peculiarities (sometimes only preferences) occur in the *-our* group (*colour, honour*), the *-re* group (*centre, theatre*); the *-ise* words (*criticise, agonise*; though *-ize* would now appear to be preferred); certain conjugated forms (*travelled, travelling*) or derived forms (*traveller, jeweller*) where the British double consonants; *-xion* words (*connexion* [still used, though *connection* is now preferred], *inflexion*, but *confection, inspection*); *-ce* words (*defence, pretence; licence and practice* as nouns, but *license and practise* preferred as verbs); words of Greek derivation containing the diphthongs *ae* or *oe*, from which Americans usually drop the *a* or *o*, like *aetiology, anaesthesia, anaemia, oedema, oenology, oesophagus*. As to the treatment of diphthongs in words derived from the Greek, note the letter that appeared in *The Times* (London) of July 21, 1986:

### Unkind Cut

From Dr P. Furniss

Sir, What chance of survival has the diphthong when even you cannot spell "Caesarean" (leading article, July 11)? I note that you also prefer medieval to mediaeval.

As an aesthetist I must declare a partisan interest in the matter, but I am sure Aesculapius would add his support to my plea.

Sir, I beg you to protect the disappearing diphthong; it is an endangered English species!

Yours faithfully,

P. FURNISS.

10 Mile End Road, Norwich.

July 12.

Some common individual differences are found in *cheque* (check), *gaol* (jail), *kerb, pyjamas, storey* (meaning 'floor' of a building), *tyre, aluminium, grey, whisky* (but note *Irish whiskey*—see entry under **whisky**), *manoeuvre*, and again in the consonant-doubling department, *waggon, carburettor* (or *carburetter*), and others.

# APPENDIX II

## GLOSSARIES AND TABLES

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### A. Currency

Up to August 1, 1969, British coins in regular use were the halfpenny (pronounced HAY'PNY), penny, threepence (pronounced THRUH PNY, THRUPPENNY, THRUPPENCE, sometimes THREPPENCE; sometimes called THREPPENNY BIT), sixpence (nicknamed *tanner*, sometimes *bender*), shilling, florin (2 shillings), and half-crown (2½ shillings). Twenty shillings made a pound; 12 pence (plural of *penny*) made a shilling. Thus there were 240 pence in a pound.

The farthing (¼ penny) was discontinued years ago; the halfpenny was demonetized on August 1, 1969; the half-crown on January 1, 1970. The *guinea* existed only as a convenient way of denoting 21 shillings, i.e., one pound, one shilling. The symbol for pound is £, placed before the number, like the dollar sign; for shilling (or shillings) it was s., for penny or pence d.; but there was also the oblique line and dash meaning *shilling(s)* written after the number; thus: 15/- meant 15 shillings. If there were pence as well, the dash was omitted; thus 15/9, orally *fifteen and nine*, meant 15 shillings and 9 pence.

But on February 15, 1971, the British decimalized their currency, eliminating shillings as such, leaving only pounds and pence (now abbreviated to *p*), with 100 new pence to the pound. What used to be a shilling is now 5 new pence, a florin is now 10 new pence, and so on. (The *new* soon began to be dropped.) The old shillings and 2-shilling pieces (the same sizes as the new 5- and 10-pence pieces but different designs) have become collectors' items. What was one pound two shillings (£1-2-0) is now written £1.10. With the coming of the 100-pence pound, it became the fancy of some merchants, after adding up a column, to announce the total in terms of pence alone; thus: "111 pence" for £1.11 or "342, please," for £3.42. This custom is undoubtedly a hangover from the practice, in the old shilling days, of stating prices in shillings even when they exceeded a pound; thus: 102/6 or 200 s. Apparently, stating the price in smaller units is thought to make things sound cheaper.

On decimalization day ("D-Day") the remaining old coins all became a thing of the past . . . or did they? Although the mint thereafter turned out only the new halfpennies (now discontinued), pennies and 2, 5, 10, and 50 pence pieces, lo! the old pennies, threepences, and sixpences were nevertheless at first allowed to circulate alongside the new coins for a year and a half (the old pennies and threepences were later excommunicated and the sixpences "restyled" 2½ p, as of September 1, 1971), either because they went into the old telephone and vending machine coin slots, or out of sentimental attachment to relics of the old regime, or because the British cannot resist the attraction for introducing into almost any situation a bit of amiably maddening confusion or something to grumble about.

With sixpence temporarily worth less than threepence, there was bound to be a fair amount of consternation, indignation, error, high amusement, cries in Par-

liament of "Resign!," and general hilarity. Despite all this streamlining, however, things will go on not being worth a farthing and ladies will go on spending a penny albeit a new one. *Pee* is now the familiar pronunciation of *p* (*penny*), and 2 *pee* and 3 *pee* are heard in place of the old *tuppence* and *thruppence*.

## B. Financial Terms

For the benefit of those who follow the financial news, *stocks* are called *shares* in Britain, and *stocks* in Britain are *government bonds*. Stock prices are quoted in penny denominations, as are increases, decreases, averages, and the like. Thus, a stock quoted at 150 would be selling at 150 *pence*, or roughly around \$2.25 per share (as of June, 2000). A *bonus issue* or *share* is a stock dividend. Preferred stock is called *preference shares*. *Scrip* means a *temporary stock certificate*, not a certificate for a fraction of a share, as in America.

## C. Units of Measure

### 1. Dry Measure

#### a. Barrel

A *barrel* is a varying unit of weight (or other quantitative measure). It depends on what it is a *barrel* of. It works this way:

<i>Commodity</i>	<i>Weight in lbs.</i>
soft soap	256
butter	224
beef	200
flour	196
gunpowder	100

Be careful: Applied to beer and tar, *barrel* is a unit of volume expressed in gallons and works this way:

<i>Commodity</i>	<i>No. of gals.</i>
beer	36
tar	26 $\frac{1}{2}$

And remember, a *gallon* is an *Imperial gallon*, equal to approximately 120 per cent of an American gallon (1.20095 per cent is a little closer). And to make things just a bit less certain, a *barrel* of fish is 500 *fish*! For other examples of the British determination to keep things flexible, or doggedly inconsistent, see e and f below.

#### b. Hundredweight

112 pounds in Britain; 100 pounds in America.

#### c. Keel

Weight of coal that can be carried on a *keel*, and still used as a wholesale coal measure. Since a British ton is 2240 lbs. and a British cwt. (hundredweight) is 112 lbs., a *keel* is, in American terms, 47,488 lbs., or a sliver under 23 $\frac{3}{4}$  tons, all of which is about to become totally immaterial under the fast-encroaching metric system.

#### d. Quart

1.20095 American quarts. See also 2.a below.

#### e. Score

i. 20 or 21 lbs, in weighing pigs or oxen. If you should happen to be in the British countryside and want to buy some pigs, don't think £2.99 a *score* is the bargain it

seems: *score* doesn't mean 'twenty' in this usage. It is a unit of weight, regional, and applies especially to pig and cattle raising.

ii. 20 to 26 tubs in dispensing coal. *Tub*, incidentally, in various trades (butter, grain, tea, etc.) is a flexible unit of measure, depending on the commodity. This flexibility seems peculiarly British.

### f. Stone

Generally, 14 lbs. British bathroom scales, as well as those in railroad stations and similar public places, are calibrated in *stones*, *half-stones*, and *pounds*, but Americans find it rather difficult to translate *stones* into *pounds* because 14 is a hard number to handle in mental arithmetic. To make things worse, a *stone* of meat or fish is 8 lbs., a stone of cheese is 16 lbs., etc. Eight 14-lb. stones make a *hundredweight*, which is 112 lbs. in Britain (more logically, 100 lbs. in America). Perhaps a table of terms used in the trade would help, showing the meaning of *stone* applied to various commodities.

<i>Commodity</i>	<i>Weight in lbs.</i>
hemp	32
cheese	16
potatoes	14
iron	14
wool	14*
meat	8
fish	8
glass	5

All of this is becoming history with Britain's adoption of the metric system.

### g. Ton

2,240 lbs.; an American ton contains 2,000 lbs. Note that a British hundredweight contains 112 lbs. (not 100) so that 20 of them make up a British ton. It may be interesting to note that the Americans adopted British weights and measures in the early years, and then the British upped their "Imperial" standards in the early 1800s. See also **gallon** (2.a, below).

### h. Windle

Approximately 3 bushels. An agricultural measure, used for grain.

## 2. Liquid Measure

### a. Gallon

The standard British gallon is the *Imperial gallon*, equal to 277.420 cubic inches. The standard U.S. gallon is the old British *wine gallon*, equal to 231 cubic inches. Thus, the British gallon equals 1.20095, or almost exactly  $1\frac{1}{5}$  American gallons. This ratio follows through in liquid measure terms used in both countries for parts of a gallon, to wit: quarter ( $\frac{1}{4}$  gallon); pint ( $\frac{1}{8}$  gallon); gill ( $\frac{1}{32}$  gallon except that a gill is not uniform in all parts of Britain). And as to terms of dry measure, look out for the British quart, which equals 1.0320, rather than 1.20095, American dry quarts.

### b. Gill

(The g is soft). When *gill* is used as a liquid measure in Britain, it usually means  $\frac{1}{4}$  pint (i.e.,  $\frac{1}{4}$  of  $\frac{1}{8}$  of an *Imperial gallon*) and is therefore 1.2 times as large as an

\* Caution! 14 lbs. in sales to outsiders, but 15 lbs. in the case of sales to other growers or dealers.

American *gill*; but be careful, because in some parts of Britain it means  $1\frac{1}{2}$  an *Imperial pint*, or exactly twice as much as in other parts of Britain.

**c. Pint.** See under **gallon**, above. See also **pint** under alphabetical listing.

**d. Quart.** See under **gallon**, above.

## D. Numbers

### Billion

One followed by twelve zeros (called *noughts* or *ciphers* in Britain). An American *billion* is only *one thousand million* (1,000,000,000), which is called a *thousand million* or a *milliard* in Britain. There are wholly different nomenclature systems in the two countries for numbers big enough to be stated in powers of a million. This is important to mathematicians, astronomers, and astronauts, for whose benefit the following partial table is submitted:

English	American	Number	Formation
million	million	1,000,000	1 with 6 zeros
milliard	billion	1,000,000,000	1 " 9 "
billion	trillion	1,000,000 <sup>2</sup>	1 " 12 "
thousand billion	quadrillion	$1,000 \times 1,000,000^2$	1 " 15 "
trillion	quintillion	1,000,000 <sup>3</sup>	1 " 18 "
thousand trillion	sextillion	$1,000 \times 1,000,000^3$	1 " 21 "
quadrillion	septillion	1,000,000 <sup>4</sup>	1 " 24 "
thousand quadrillion	octillion	$1,000 \times 1,000,000^4$	1 " 27 "
quintillion	nonillion	1,000,000 <sup>5</sup>	1 " 30 "
thousand quintillion	decillion—	$1,000 \times 1,000,000^5$	1 " 33 "
sextillion (sexillion)		1,000,000 <sup>6</sup>	1 " 36 "
septillion		1,000,000 <sup>7</sup>	1 " 42 "
octillion		1,000,000 <sup>8</sup>	1 " 48 "
nonillion		1,000,000 <sup>9</sup>	1 " 54 "
decillion		1,000,000 <sup>10</sup>	1 " 60 "
centillion		1,000,000 <sup>100</sup>	1 " 600 "

Warning note: see the following from *The Times* (London) of November 14, 1974:

### How the Treasury Confuses Billions

The Treasury seems to be trying to make a significant change in the English language in a footnote to the Chancellor's Budget speech.

This defines the word "billion" as one thousand million—though since the philosopher John Locke first used the word in the late 17th century it has meant a million million here.

The United States, of course, uses the definition favoured by the Treasury. But the traditional English usage was confirmed in the Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary published only two years ago.

Asked to explain, the Treasury confused things further. Informally within the Department, it seems, the word means a thousand million, "but the fact that officials use the term does not necessarily mean that it has been officially adopted."

And "it is probably safer to talk about a thousand million or a million million" — which of course is precisely what Locke and his contemporaries were trying to avoid when they coined the word in the first place.

Supplementary warning note: to confound the confusion and enhance the fun, see the following, from *The Times* (London) of October 29, 1975:

### Complaint over 'Billion' Dismissed

*Exercise in pedantry, the Press Council declares*

To uphold a complaint about the misuse of the word "billion" would be no more than an exercise in pedantry, the Press Council said in an adjudication yesterday.

Mr. J. T. Anderson, of Rugby, complained that *The Times* misused the word "billion", having reported remarks by an MP and captain of industry showing "illiteracy and innumeracy."

Mr. A. D. Holmes replied that *The Times* agreed that billion in English meant a million million. However, the Business News section of the newspaper preferred to use the American style (a thousand millions) on the grounds that it was now general and that to translate it into British terms would be misleading. *The Times* was anxious to establish a uniform practice which would be acceptable to scientists, mathematicians, economists and financiers.

Mr. N. Keith, for *The Times*, wrote further to Mr. Anderson saying it was incorrect to say that the business section preferred the American style. In fact it invariably preferred "X,000m", except when reporting a speech or when the term was used figuratively to mean large numbers. The *Financial Times* had formally adopted billion and informed its readers. *The Times* might be forced to do the same if inflation carried on at the present rate.

Mr. Anderson replied with a request that *The Times* should publish his letter but the newspaper replied that it regretted that it had not been possible to find a place for it.

The Press Council's adjudication was:

"The tongue which Shakespeare spoke (although in justice to him he did not employ the word "billion") has been, as some think, much mutilated in the centuries which have passed. The editor who chooses to use a word in a sense different from that accepted by others can hardly be accused of impropriety unless his use of it is calculated to mislead. No doubt the word "billion" as employed in England (but not in America or in the Continental languages) means, in a classical sense accepted here, a million million. In America it means a thousand million and the word is now increasingly used, like other American expressions, in this latter sense in economic and business matters.

"The Press Council notes that the editor of *The Times* seeks to establish a uniform practice, and considers that to uphold this complaint would be no more than an exercise in pedantry."

But wait: see the following, from *The Times* of November 19, 1975:

### Billions and Trillions

*From Mr. R. H. Ramsford*

Sir, Whether or not you were right in refusing to publish a letter criticizing the misuse of the word billion, the Press Council was certainly wrong to dismiss the criticism as pedantry. Regrettably, this misuse is widespread and can—and does—lead to doubt and even outright misunderstanding.

What is particularly disquieting is that a body of the status of the Press Council is apparently so ill-informed that it has no hesitation in stating that billion is not used to signify a million millions in the continental languages. No extensive research would have been needed to reveal its mistake. The oldest edition of *Le Petit Larousse* I have at hand, the 1962 edition, already defines "billion" as "Un million de millions ( $10^{12}$ ) ou 1 000 000 000 000/Autref., et encore aux Etats-Unis, syn. de MILLIARD". And its Spanish counterpart in 1972 simply defines "billón" as "Millón de millones".

The two main European countries that formerly used billion in the American sense were France and Portugal, but at a postwar International Conference on Weights and Measures, in 1948 if I remember rightly, they agreed to fall into line with Italy, Germany, England, and other countries that had always used it, even in common speech, to mean a million squared—and trillion to mean a million cubed, and so on.

There is no need to perpetuate the abuse, when we already have an unambiguous word for a thousand million: “milliard”, which has long been widely used in Belgium, France and Italy at least. Alternatively, since the metric system is becoming more familiar, why not make use of its prefixes? “Megabuck” was in vogue some years ago, I have seen “kF” (for “kilo-francs”) in official French writing, and I understand that “kilopounds” is beginning to be used in English. So why not adopt the prefixes giga (G) and tera (T) to signify the American and European billion respectively?

I hope *The Times* will decide to set the lead and popularize the use of one or other of the methods suggested above.

Your sincerely,  
R. H. Ransford,  
11 Grovewood Close,  
Chorley Wood,  
Hertfordshire.  
October 29.

And what's more (*Times*, same date):

*From Dr. G. B. R. Feilden, FRS*

Sir, In the current controversy over the misuse of the word billion it might help to note the dispassionate advice about the use of such words which is given in British Standard 350 *Conversion factors and tables*. Part 1 of the standard, published in 1974, states: “In view of the differences between European and USA practice, ambiguities can easily arise with the words ‘billion’, ‘trillion’ and ‘quadrillion’; therefore their use should be avoided.”

It is thus encouraging for us to know that *The Times* prefers the form X,000m and will continue to use it except when quoting less accurate sources.

Yours faithfully,  
G. B. R. FEILDEN,  
Director of General British Standards Institution,  
2 Park Street, W1.  
October 29.

*The Economist* weekly adopted the American usage years ago, to the annoyance of some readers. One wonders how long it will take for the British public to be won over to this adoption. As recently as December 7, 1979, the following letter appeared in *The Times*:

### **Billion Dollar Blunder**

*From Señor Francisco R. Parra*

Sir, Reference my letter “No ‘ulterior motive’ behind Venezuelan oil announcement” (November 29), we erroneously addressed you in American and said “billion” dollars. Understandably believing we were addressing you in English, you wrote out three more zeros (oops, “noughts”). Correct capital cost figures should be \$3,500m to \$4,000m for 125,000 barrels per day by 1988, and \$20,000m by the year 2000.

Yours truly,  
 FRANCISCO R. PARRA,  
 Managing Director,  
 Petroleos de Venezeula (UK) SA,  
 7 Old Park Lane,  
 London, W1.  
 November 29.

Philip Howard, in Chapter 4, entitled 'Billion,' of *Words Fail Me* (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1980), favors ending "the dangerous confusion by conforming to the American style of billion." And the BBC is having a hard time forcing *Centigrade* on its listeners and the die-hards are still counting money in shillings and old pence (see **Appendix II.A**). So much for Progress!

The British always put an *and* between 100 and a smaller number, as in *a/one hundred and twenty*, or *a/one hundred and ten thousand*. This *and* is normally omitted in America.

## E. Automotive Terms

The British equivalents of automotive terms in common use, such as *boot* ('trunk') and *bonnet* ('hood'), appear in the alphabetical listing below. For the benefit of car buffs or technicians and other specialists concerned with scientific automotive terminology, this list, supplied by British Leyland Motors, Inc., may be of interest. The usual order followed in this book (English-American) is here reversed, on the theory that in this case the American reader knows the American equivalent and might thus more readily locate the relevant pairing.

American	British
<b>Body Parts</b>	
bumper guard	<i>overrider</i>
cowl	<i>scuttle</i>
dashboard	<i>fascia panel</i>
door post	<i>door pillar</i>
door stop	<i>check strap</i>
door vent <i>or</i> vent	<i>quarter light</i>
fender	<i>wing</i>
firewall	<i>bulkhead</i>
hood	<i>bonnet</i>
license plate	<i>number plate</i>
rear seat back <i>or</i> backrest	<i>rear seat squab</i>
rocker panel	<i>valance</i>
skirt	<i>apron</i>
toe pan	<i>toe board</i>
trunk	<i>boot</i>
windshield	<i>windscreen</i>
wheelhouse <i>or</i> housing	<i>wheel arch</i>
<b>Brake Parts</b>	
parking brake	<i>hand brake</i>
<b>Chassis Parts</b>	
muffler	<i>exhaust silencer</i>
side rail	<i>side member</i>

**Electrical Equipment**

back up light  
 dimmer switch  
 dome light  
 gas pump *or* fuel pump  
 generator  
 ignition wiring  
 parking light  
 tail light  
 spark plug  
 turn indicator, blinker  
 voltage regulator

*reversing light*  
*dip switch*  
*roof lamp*  
*petrol pump*  
*dynamo*  
*ignition harness*  
*side light*  
*tail lamp or tail light*  
*sparkling-plug*  
*trafficator*  
*control box*

**Motor and Clutch Parts**

carburetor  
 clutch throwout bearing  
 engine block  
 hose clamp  
 pan  
 piston *or* wrist pin  
 rod (control) bearing

**Engine and Clutch Parts**

*carburetter*  
*clutch release bearing*  
*cylinder block*  
*hose clip*  
*sump*  
*gudgeon pin*  
*big-end*

**Rear Axle and Transmission Parts**

axle shaft  
 drive shaft  
 grease fitting  
 ring gear and pinion

*half shaft*  
*propeller shaft*  
*grease nipple*  
*crown wheel and pinion*

**Steering Parts**

control arm  
 king pin  
 pitman arm  
 steering idler  
 steering knuckle  
 tie bar *or* track bar

*wishbone*  
*swivel pin*  
*drop arm*  
*steering relay*  
*stub axle*  
*track rod*

**Tools and Accessories**

antenna  
 crank handle  
 lug wrench  
 wheel wrench  
 wrench

*aerial*  
*starting handle*  
*box spanner*  
*wheel brace*  
*spanner*

**Transmission Parts**

counter shaft  
 emergency brake  
 gear shift lever  
 output shaft  
 shift bar  
 transmission case

**Gearbox Parts**

*layshaft*  
*parking brake*  
*gear lever*  
*main shaft*  
*selector rod*  
*gearbox housing*

**Tires**

tire  
 tread

*tyre*  
*track*

## F. Musical Notation

In musical notation the British have rejected common fractions, as will be seen in the following table of equivalent terms in everyday use in the respective countries:

British	American
<i>breve</i>	double whole note
<i>semibreve</i>	whole note
<i>minim</i>	half note
<i>crotchet</i>	quarter note
<i>quaver</i>	eighth note
<i>semiquaver</i>	sixteenth note
<i>demisemiquaver</i>	thirty-second note
<i>hemidemisemiquaver</i>	sixty-fourth note

The *semibreve* is the longest note in common use. How a half note got the name of *minim* is a great mystery to many people, especially since another (non-musical) British meaning of *minim* is 'creature of minimum size or significance,' and its non-musical American meanings have to do with aspects of minuteness. The answer is that at one time it was the shortest note in use. *Crotchet* is another funny one: it is derived from the Old French *crochet*, meaning 'little hook,' and everything would have been quite neat and tidy if the quarter note had a little hook, but it doesn't, and little hooks don't start until we get to eighth notes. *Quaver* is used in music in both countries to indicate a trill, and one can see a connection between trilling and eighth notes. A final mystery is the connection between *breve*—derived, of course, from *breve*, the neuter form of *brevis* (Latin for 'brief')—and a double whole note, a note no longer used in musical notation, which is the equivalent of two whole notes, and that makes it anything in the world but brief. The explanation is that in the Middle Ages there was a note even longer than the *breve*, something apparently called a *long*, compared with which a double whole note would seem brief.

## G. Slang

### 1. Cant Terms

No attempt is made to include cant terms in this book. These are terms peculiar to particular groups. The *taxi-drivers* of London have their own code: Charing Cross Underground ('subway') Station, recently renamed *Embankment*, is the *Rats' Hole*; St. Pancras Station, the *Box of Bricks*; the Army and Navy Store in Victoria Street is the *Sugar Box*; the St. Thomas' Hospital *cab-rank* ('taxi stand') is the *Poultice Shop*; the one at London Bridge the *Sand Bin*; Harley Street (where doctor's offices cluster) is *Pill Island*; Bedford Row (where lawyers' offices proliferate) is *Shark's Parade*; and the Tower of London is *Sparrow Corner*.

London busmen have a lingo of their own: The last bus is the *Ghost Train*; to slow up (because of exceeding the schedule) is to *scratch about*; passengers on their way to the greyhound races are *dogs*; a busful is a *domino load*, and a *stone-cold* bus is an empty one; a plainclothes bus inspector is a *spot* and he can *book* ('report') a driver; passengers are *rabbits*; a *short one* is an unfinished trip; an accident is a *set*; to arrive late for duty is to *slip up*; a *cushy road* is an easy trip, and a busy one is known as *having a road on*. In the days when trolley cars competed, the British term *tramcar* became the rhyming equivalent *jam jar*.

Sports talk is another matter. Any newspaper report or broadcast or telecast of a cricket or rugby match would be as unintelligible to an American as an American sportswriter's commentary on a baseball game would be to a Britisher. To

understand these categories of terminology, the reader must refer to technical works on the respective subjects.

## 2. London Slang

London slang is almost a language of its own, and to complicate matters, it keeps shifting all the time. George Orwell in *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) gives a list of cant words in this category, including the following:

<i>gagger</i>	beggar; street performer
<i>moocher</i>	beggar
<i>clodhopper</i>	street dancer
<i>glimmer</i>	car watcher
<i>split</i>	detective
<i>flattie</i>	policeman
<i>clod</i>	policeman
<i>toby</i>	tramp
<i>drop</i>	money to a beggar
<i>slang</i>	street-peddler's license
<i>the Smoke</i>	London
<i>judy</i>	woman
<i>spike</i>	flophouse
<i>lump</i>	flophouse
<i>deaner</i>	shilling
<i>hog</i>	shilling
<i>tosheroon</i>	half-crown
<i>sprowsie</i>	sixpence
<i>shackles</i>	soup
<i>chat</i>	louse

## 3. Rhyming Slang

Rhyming slang is a type of cant that has developed from the peculiarly cockney game of replacing certain common words with phrases ending with a word that rhymes with the replaced word. Thus:

<i>boat race</i>	face
<i>daisy roots</i>	boots
<i>German bands</i>	hands
<i>loaf of bread</i>	head
<i>mince pies</i>	eyes
<i>Mutt and Jeff</i>	deaf
<i>north and south</i>	mouth
<i>plates of meat</i>	feet
<i>tit for tat</i>	hat
<i>trouble and strife</i>	wife
<i>Uncle Ned</i>	head
<i>whistle and flute</i>	suit

And many more. One doesn't run into these expressions very often, but when one does meet them, they can be pretty puzzling, especially when the cant phrase itself becomes truncated or otherwise corrupted through cockney usage. Thus *loaf of bread* is shortened to *loaf*, *mince pies* becomes *minces*, *tit for tat* turns into *tit-fer*, *whistle and flute* loses the *flute*, *German bands* winds up as *Germans*, and so on. The results: *loaf* for head, *minces* for eyes, *whistle* for suit, etc., come out as quite arbitrary substitutes miles removed from the words they stand for. One often

heard outside the cockney world is *loaf*, particularly in the expression, *Use your loaf!* (*Use your bean!*) and *Mind your loaf!* (*Low bridge!*). In certain cases there is a further hurdle in that the replaced word is itself a Britishism requiring explanation, like the case of *daisy roots* for *boots*, where *daisy roots* becomes *daisies*, *boots* would be shoes in America, and we wind up with *daisies* for shoes, an etymological riddle. For treatment of this subject, see *The Muvver Tongue*, by Robert Barltrop and Jim Wolveridge (The Journeyman Press, London, and West Nyack, N.Y., 1980).

#### 4. Poker Slang

<i>all blue</i>	flush
<i>busted flush</i>	four flush
<i>broken melody</i>	ruptured straight
<i>Colonel Dennison</i>	three tens
<i>Morgan's orchard*</i>	two pair
<i>pea green</i>	flush
<i>running flush</i>	straight flush
<i>stuttering run**</i>	broken straight

\* Also means a count of four in cribbage.

\*\* Missing one in the middle, like 7, 8, 9, jack, queen.

#### 5. British Betting Terms

According to Bulletin No. 49 (April 1977) of the American Name Society, quoting *The Daily Telegraph* (London) of March 26, 1976, the British use the following terms in placing multiple race-track bets, which they call *punting*:

**each-way:** This is a quick way of writing two bets. It means a win bet on a selected horse and also a place bet on the same horse to an equal amount of stake money. Thus, *10p each-way* means a 10p win bet and 10p place bet. Total outlay: 20p.

**double:** Two horses are linked in one bet. If the first named horse wins, the stake money and the winnings are invested on the other horse.

**treble:** As a *double*, but with three horses linked together.

**accumulator:** As a *treble*, but with four or more horses. Advantage: stakes are kept low.

**any-to-come (ATC) or if cash:** Another type of wager where any cash (winning plus stakes) forthcoming from earlier bets finances further bets on selected horses. Examples of *ATC* or *if cash* bets follow:

**round the clock:** Three or more selections are each backed singly, with *ATC* bets on the others should there be enough cash available.

**up and down:** Two horses, each backed singly, with an *ATC* bet on the other.

**rounder:** Three horses, each backed singly. If cash, the other two horses are backed in a double.

**roundabout:** A rounder with double stakes on the double.

**patent:** Three horses backed in three single-win bets, three doubles, and a treble (seven bets).

**round robin:** Three horses linked in *up and down* bets on each pair, plus three *doubles* and a *treble* (10 bets).

**Yankee:** Four horses backed in six *doubles*, four *trebles*, and an *accumulator* (11 bets).

**flag:** Four horses. Each pair is backed *up and down* as well as all four horses in a *Yankee* (23 bets).

**Canadian:** Five horses backed in ten *doubles*, ten *trebles*, five four-horse *accumulators*, and one five-horse *accumulator* (26 bets).

**Heinz (57 varieties):** Name used in Britain for any kind of multiple mixture: a mongrel dog might be a *Heinz hound*, etc. Six horses backed in 15 *doubles*, 20 *trebles*, 15 four-horse and six five-horse *accumulators*, and one six-horse *accumulator* (57 bets).

## H. Food Names

Food names are very puzzling and of butchers' terms only a few labels of specific cuts of meat are included. There are a good many that would baffle an American shopper: *rump steak* is sirloin; *sirloin* is porterhouse; a *baron* is a double sirloin; *silverside* is top round. It seems worse at the fish store (*fishmonger's*): one can hear of *brill* (similar to a small turbot), *coalfish*, also called *coley fillet* and *saithe* (black cod), *witch* (resembling lemon sole), *John Dory* (a flat fish with a big head), *huss*, also called *dogfish*, *rig*, and *robin huss* (similar to a small conger eel), and other strange species, to say nothing of unfamiliar seafoods like *winkles* and *prawns*. At the bakery one finds all kinds of goodies with alien names. Many are entries in the book; ignore the labels and purchase by sight and smell.

## I. Botanical and Zoological Names

Botanical and zoological (especially avian) names present special difficulties, whether they are British names for shared species or simply names for those that do not include the United States in their habitats. There are exclusively British geological terms as well. British apple trees bear fruit called *Beauty of Bath*, *Cox*, and *queening*. In the floral department, wild or cultivated, one finds the *cuckoobud*, *buttercress*, *kingcup*, *St. Anthony's turnip*, *blister-flower*, *horse gold*, *butter rose*, *butter daisy*, or *gold cup*; a fair collection of synonyms for the modest buttercup. Moreover, *cuckoobud* is not to be confused with the British *cuckooflower*, a form of wild mustard with white or lilac flowers, and itself synonymous (in Britain) with *lady's smock* and *milkmaid* (actually the *cardamine pratensis*), or with the *cuckoopint* (also known, collectively, as *lords and ladies*), which Americans call *jack-in-the-pulpit*, or with *cuckoospit*, the foamy mass in which various insects lay their eggs, often seen on Queen Anne's lace, which the British call *wild carrot*; and *cuckoospit* itself is usually known in America as *frogspit*. British *orange balsam* flowers, also known there as *swingboats* because the flowers are shaped rather like the carnival boats on some of the giant swings, are known as *jewelweed* or *touch-me-not* in America; *reed mace* is the United States broad-leaved *cattail*. Daffodils are *daffodils* in both countries, but are sometimes called *Lent lilies* by the British because of their time of blooming. *Butterbar*, *wild rhubarb*, and *bog rhubarb* are British synonyms for American *batterdock* or *umbrella leaves*. Still in the flora division, *wainscot* is the British name for a superior type of oak imported from the Baltic region especially for wainscoting. To go entomological for a moment, the common British butterfly known there as the *Camberwell beauty* is our old friend the *mourning cloak* in America. With respect to avian terminology: a *butterbump* is a *bittern*; a *moorhen* is a *gallinule*; the *tree creeper* is the *brown creeper*; *windhovers* are *kestrels*. For devotees of the earth sciences we find *beck* and *burn* for *brook*, *rig* or *rigg* for *ridge*, *wold* for an open tract of uncultivated land, *moss* for *swamp*, *nick* for a small valley or water-cut *gorge*, *sea-fret* for thick *fog*, and *carr* for a dense *thicket*. Some of these terms are regional, some may be classified as dialect, some are assuredly standard, many will be strange even to British ears, but you never know when you're going to run into them.

**J. Britain, Briton, British, English, etc.**

Except in more or less official contexts, the inhabitants of the British Isles tend to think and speak of themselves as English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish first and British second. In *How To Be an Alien* (André Deutsch, London, 1946), George Mikes told us that an alien may become British, but never English. By *British*, he means a naturalized subject of Great Britain; by *English*, he means English in culture, outlook, heart, and spirit. In a letter to *The Times* (London) on August 25, 1982, the distinction is made quite emphatically:

**Race and Crime**

From Mr D.K. Clarebrough

Sir, Dr Sandra Wallman (August 20) writes that "black people living in Brixton . . . are English by objective right as well as subjective preference." British they may be but English surely not. If I'm wrong, who then are the black or coloured people I see cheering West Indies, India or Pakistan, when they play the England cricket team on an English ground?

We have a multiracial, multicultural and multinational society.

Yours faithfully,

DENIS CLAREBROUGH

Southwood House,

Hilltop Road,

Dronfield,

Sheffield.

August 20.

The word *Briton* sounds historical or literary to them, and *Britisher* sounds like an Americanism. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* says *Britisher* is the U.S. term for a British subject "as distinct from an American citizen" and goes on to say that it is "apparently of American origin but disclaimed by U.S. writers." *Britain* is used in Great Britain, of course, but English people are more likely to refer to it as *England*. To an older generation of the inhabitants of Britain, and still more, perhaps, to those of the white Commonwealth countries, the term *British* covers, as well, the former dominions, colonies, etc., at least those settled from the British Isles. *United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland* may still remain the official term for the country, and for alphabetical seating at the United Nations, it is listed as *U.K.*—in convenient proximity to the U.S. Historically, it is *Great Britain*, to distinguish it from Brittany in France. *Briticism* or *Britishism* is a term traced back to 1883 and is handy for distinguishing British idiom from the American, but in distinction to, e.g., French, the term would be *Anglicism*. A final oenological note: *English wine* is made from English grapes, grown on English vines. *British wine* (also called 'made wine') is fermented in Britain from foreign grape-concentrate. Never confuse the two: the English Vineyards Association (EVA) would never forgive you.

As to the inhabitants of Scotland: the variants are Scotch, Scots, and Scottish. According to Fowler (*A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, 2nd edition revised by Sir Ernest Gowers, Oxford, 1965), *Scottish* is closest to the original form, *Scotch* was the English contraction, and *Scots* the one adopted in Scotland. The current favorite in Scotland is *Scottish*, next, *Scots*, with *Scotch* being more or less discarded. England has gone along with this, but in certain stock phrases, *Scotch* has been retained in both places and the rest of the English-speaking world, thus: *Scotch whiskey* (*whisky* in Britain), broth, tweed, egg, woodcock, mist, terrier, pine, beef; and Scotch House is a famous London shop dispensing Scottish textiles and apparel. The English call the dialect spoken in Scotland *Scotch*; the Scots

usually call it *Scots*, and the dialect of the Lowlands *Lallans*, a corruption of *Lowlands*.

## K. Cricket Terms

For the benefit of any Americans who may develop an interest in the English national sport, cricket, there follows a glossary that appeared in a cricket periodical published by *The Sun* (London, 1972). The definitions are couched in cricketers' and in turn need defining and translation in many cases:

**beamer:** a delivery that goes through head high to the batsman without bouncing after leaving the bowler's hand.

**blob:** one of various words used to denote an innings where the batsman has failed to score.

**bosie:** the Australian name for the googly, the ball that goes from off to leg instead of turning from the leg as with a normal leg break.

**bouncer:** has the same end product as a beamer in that the delivery goes through about head high to the batsman but is achieved by pitching short of a length.

**boundary:** four runs.

**castle:** the stumps.

**century:** 100 runs.

**cherry:** the ball, particularly when new and shiny.

**Chinaman:** this is bowled by a left-arm spin bowler who makes the ball turn into the right-handed batsman rather than the normal left arm spin delivery, which turns away from the right hander.

**Chinese Cut:** this refers to the snick off the inside or bottom edge of the bat whereby the ball goes down the leg side close to the wicket instead of towards a third man as the batsman intended.

**cutter:** a fast spinning delivery that moves quickly off the wicket when it pitches. Can be either off-cutter or leg-cutter.

**drag:** describes the action of the fast bowler when dragging his back foot along the ground in his delivery stride.

**duck:** no score.

**finger spinner:** a bowler who uses his fingers in order to impart spin on the ball, thereby making it change direction when it pitches. A right-handed finger spinner is an off spin bowler, making the ball move in from the off side.

**flipper:** a delivery from a leg break bowler which has top spin, making it hurry through quickly and straighten when it pitches.

**gate:** the gap between bat and pad when a batsman is playing a stroke.

**googly:** the more common term to describe a bosie, also known as "wrong' un."

**hob:** the stumps as in castle.

**inswinger:** a ball that swings through the air from the off side to leg.

**king pair:** falling first ball each innings of a two innings match.

**length:** the area in which the ball should pitch for a perfect delivery to prevent a batsman playing backward or forward with safety.

**long hop:** a short-of-2-length delivery that comes through at a nice height for a batsman to hit, generally on the leg side.

**Nelson:** all the ones as in 111. Considered unlucky for a batsman or a side to be on that figure. Double Nelson is 222.

**nightwatchman:** a lower order batsman who goes to the wicket just before close of play to save a recognised batsman from having to bat and possibly losing his wicket in the few remaining minutes.

**outswinger:** a ball that swings through the air toward the off side.

**pair:** signifies a batsman failing to score in both innings of a match.

**sticky dog** or **wicket:** a wicket on which the ball turns viciously as the wicket dries out under hot sun after being affected by the rain. It is not often that a true “sticky dog” is found in England but they have been known in Australia, notably in Brisbane.

**ton:** a century.

**wrist spinner:** a bowler who uses his wrist to spin the ball, making it come out of the back of his hand as with a leg break.

**Yorker:** an overhand delivery that pitches near the batting crease and goes that under the bat as the batsman starts to play his stroke generally moving forward.

## L. Connotative Place-Names

The use of connotative place-names occurs in every language. The French author placing a character on the rue du Faubourg Saint Honoré, the German writing of the Kurfürstendamm, the Italian locating a scene on the Via Veneto or the Piazza San Marco are all using place-names to create a backdrop, an atmosphere. As for the English, the following might well perplex an American reader unfamiliar with Britain and British life:

*Albany.* A most exclusive apartment house (*block of flats*) in London, whose occupants always include many distinguished names.

*Belgravia.* A fashionable district of London. Its name is used metaphorically to mean the upper middle class.

*Blackpool.* A seaside resort in West Lancashire, in northwest England, known for its appeal to working people.

*Bloomsbury.* A London district known as an intellectual center. The ‘Bloomsbury Group’ of artists, writers and intellectuals generally flourished there in the early 1920’s and gave this place-name its cachet, implying quality with a hint of preciousness.

*Bow Bells.* Literally, the bells of Bow Church in the *City* of London (a section of London housing, inter alia, the financial district). This place-name most frequently occurs in the expression *within the sound of Bow Bells*, which means ‘in the City of London.’ One born within the sound of Bow Bells is said to be a true cockney.

*Bow Street.* Famed in British detective stories as the address of the principal London police court.

*Brighton.* A Victorian seaside resort, noted for massive hotels, endless rows of middle-class boardinghouses, the Prince Regent’s ‘Pavilion,’ an antiques section known as ‘the Lanes,’ and other divertissements.

*(The) British Museum.* Often shortened to ‘The B.M.’ Recently remodeled. Britain’s great library, museum, and depository of priceless collections in history, art, archeology, etc.

*Carnaby Street.* A street in the Soho section of London, studded with apparel shops catering to the young with-it crowd in its heyday during the 1960s.

*Chelsea.* A London district, center of the smart Bohemian set.

*(The) City.* Short for *the City of London*. See *Bow Bells* (above) and *(the) City* in the alphabetical text.

*(The) Connaught.* An elegant hotel full of ancient glory and still going strong.

*Covent Garden.* A London district that once housed London’s vast, tumultuous vegetable and flower market, now removed to another part of the city, but still

- the location of street entertainers and the long-established theater bearing its name, famous for opera and ballet.
- Earl's Court.* One of London's two great sports arenas. (See *White City*, below.) The Earl's Court section of London is known for its proliferation of 'bed-sitters,' tiny one-room housing units cut out of once great mansions.
- (The) East End.* A poor section of London, which includes the docks. Becoming fashionable.
- Eaton Square, Eaton Place.* Very fashionable streets in London.
- (The) Embankment.* Road along the north bank of the Thames. Hotel rooms, offices, etc. that overlook it are most desirable, but another connotation arises from the fact that it is the sleeping place of derelicts and tramps.
- Eton, Harrow.* Leading and venerable *public schools* (i.e., private schools) for ages thirteen to eighteen, whose playing-fields breed 'the future leaders of England,' according to Tory gospel.
- Festival Hall.* One of London's great concert halls.
- Fortnum & Mason.* Often shortened to 'Fortnum's.' A department store of great elegance, with a famous tearoom catering to the upper classes.
- Golders Green.* A section of London much favored by middle-class Jews.
- Hampstead.* A borough of London frequented by practitioners of the arts.
- Harley Street.* A London street where the most expensive doctors have their offices. They generally do not participate in the National Health system. 'Harley Street doctor' has its analogue in 'Park Avenue physician.'
- Harrods.* A universal department store offering just about everything from antiques to food, all of very high quality, at non-competitive prices.
- Harrow.* See *Eton*.
- Hyde Park.* One of London's many beautiful parks. In one corner (the legendary Hyde Park Corner), speakers are permitted to address the public on just about any subject, with the emphasis generally against the **Establishment**.
- Knightsbridge.* London area offering elegant shopping.
- Lord's.* Short for *Lord's Cricket Ground*, the most famous of all cricket fields ('grounds'), home of the M.C.C. (Marylebone Cricket Club), the body that controls and is the arbiter of all things relating to cricket.
- Marks & Spencer.* A chain store, just about ubiquitous, supplying chiefly wearing apparel but in many cases expanding into other fields, like food; noted for its very competitive prices, made possible because the organization manufactures many of the goods it sells. The name is often shortened to M & S, but its most popular form is *Marks & Sparks*, a sobriquet both jocular and affectionate.
- Notting Hill Gate.* A lower class area, often the scene of racial unrest.
- (The) Old Bailey.* The chief criminal court of London.
- (The) Old Vic.* London's famous old repertory theater, known for its productions of Shakespeare. The scene has in large part shifted to the National Theatre, but the Old Vic still carries on. It has been refurbished and now enjoys a sparkling façade and elegant interior.
- (The) Oval.* London's other cricket ground. See *Lord's*.
- Oxford Street.* London's shopping street devoted to the needs of all people, hard to navigate on foot because of the crowds.
- (The) Palladium.* London's leading vaudeville house (**music-hall**), scene of generations of memorable variety.
- Park Lane.* An elegant avenue bordering Hyde Park, location of many great hotels and superior shops.
- Piccadilly.* London's historic main thoroughfare, with elegant shops and hotels.
- Portobello Road.* Scene of the historic flea market, a center for relatively inexpensive antiques.

*Regent Street.* London's most elegant shopping street.

*Rotten Row.* A fashionable equestrian track in Hyde Park, London. The name has been attributed to a number of derivations, the favorite of which is *route du roi*, the old route of the royal procession from the palace at Westminster to the royal hunting preserve. Others go back to the 18th century word, *rotan*, meaning 'wheeled vehicle' and derived from *rota*, Latin for *wheel*.

*Sadler's Wells.* A theater, the original location of the ballet company that bore its name and is now the Royal Ballet; still active as a dance center.

*Savile Row.* A London street, center of elegant *bespoke* (i.e., custom) tailoring for men.

*(The) Savoy.* One of London's oldest and most expensive hotels.

*(The) Serpentine.* A lake in Hyde Park, where people love to row.

*(The) Tate Gallery.* Almost invariably shortened to 'the Tate.' A fine permanent collection is housed in this gallery, which is also associated with avant garde shows of contemporary art.

*(The) Victoria and Albert Museum.* Usually shortened to 'The V. & A.' A museum noted, inter alia, for Victorian memorabilia.

*Wembley Stadium.* Always called 'Wembley'; a great *football* (i.e., soccer) field.

*(The) West End.* A part of London noted as the center of theater and chic restaurant life.

*White City.* Great indoor sports arena in London, home of the horse shows and other sports events and spectacles.

*Wimbledon.* A district in South London, home to the All-England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club, where the annual Lawn Tennis Championships are played.

*Wilton's.* A London fish restaurant catering to the best people.

*Winchester.* A *public school* (i.e., private school), one of the oldest, with the highest academic standards.

# Index

Note: This index lists American words, terms, and expressions followed by their British equivalents, which are listed alphabetically in the book; **boldface listings** indicate sections on specialized terms and discussions of British usage.

## A

A (B, C. etc.), alpha (beta, gamma, etc.)

abandon, abandonment

abandon, leave in the lurch

**abbreviations** 381

able seaman, rating

about, -ish

above market value, over the odds

abrupt change, turn-about

absentee ballot, postal vote

absolutely, bang

absolutely, quite

absolutely sound, one hundred percent

copper bottomed

absorbent cotton, cotton wool

absorbing, riveting

abuse, slang

access road, slip road

accident spot, black spot

acclimate, acclimatize

accommodations, accommodation

according to best usage, according to Cocker

account book, washing-book

accusation, threat

ace of spades, old mossyface

ack-ack, archies

across the street, over the road

act, come

act as chief prosecuting attorney, lead for the Crown

act disrespectfully towards, take the mickey out of

act in a friendly manner towards

(someone), show friendly to (someone)

action for a declaratory judgment, friendly action

ad, advert

add on, throw out

adhesive tape, sticky tape

adjourn, rise

adjourn Parliament, count out the house

adjustable reading lamp, anglepoise lamp

adjusted for inflation, indexed-linked

adjuster, assessor

administration, government

adoption of metric system,

metrification/metrication

advance, sub

advantage, pull

adversary, adversarial

affair, palaver

affirmative action, positive discrimination

afternoon tea, set tea

agate, bonce

ages, moons

ages, yonks

aggravation, aggro

aggressiveness, aggro

agitate, fuss

agree, accept

agree to, agree

airfield, aerodrome

airfield, tarmac

airplane, aeroplane

airs, side

aisle, corridor; gangway

ale and stout mixed, half-and-half

alert, on the spot

alfalfa, lucerne

all aboard!, close the doors, please!

all-around, all-round

all decked out, in full fig

all dolled up, dressed to the nines

all dolled up, like a dog's dinner

all expenses paid, fully found

alley, snicket; street; twitten

allocated line, spare line

allowance, table money

all set?, fit?

all set, nailed on

almond taffy, hardbake

alongside, at the side of

also-rans, ruck

alternately, turn and turn about

alumnus/alumna, old boy/girl

amateurish, prentice

ambulance, chaser, accident tout

among, amongst

anchorman, linkman

And how!, Rather!

and salad, salad

annex, mediatize  
 annoying, awkward  
 Annual Meeting of Shareholders, Annual  
     General Meeting  
 annulment, nullity  
 another drink, the other half  
 answering machine, answerphone  
 antenna, aerial  
 any odd job?, bob-a-job?  
 anything goes, all in  
 anywhere near, within kicking  
     distance of  
 apartment, flat; set  
 appetizers, starters  
 appointment to look at, order to view  
 appraise, value  
 appropriation bill, supply bill  
 apron, pinny  
 area surrounding, surround  
 arm of the law, limb of the law  
 armpit, oxters  
 army engineer, sapper  
 army stew, gippo  
 around, about  
 around, round  
 arouser, knocker-up  
 arrange for, lay on  
 arrest, detain; take in charge  
 arson, fire-raising  
 articulated lorry, trailer truck  
 arty, twee  
 as a matter of fact, actually  
 as bright as a button, as bright as a new  
     penny  
 as dead as a doornail, as dead as  
     mutton  
 as easy as pie, as easy as kiss your hand  
 as follows, as under  
 as it turned out, in the event  
 askew, skew-whiff  
 as nice as pie, as nice as ninepence  
 as of, as from  
 ass, arse  
 ass-backwards, arsy-tarsy  
 assistant maid, tweeny  
 assistant professor, senior lecturer  
 associate professor, reader  
 as soon as, directly  
 assortment, mixed bag  
 at bat, on strike  
 at full speed, flat out  
 at hand, to hand  
 at one's disposal, in hand; in one's gift  
 at the market, best offer  
 attic, loft  
 attractive (very), dishy  
 automatic airplane pilot, George  
 Automobile Association, A.A.  
 automobile horn, hooter

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 autopsy, post-mortem  
 available, to hand  
 awful, shocking  
 awfully, frightfully  
 awning (shop), sun-blind  
 aye, content; placet

## B

baby carriage, perambulator; pram;  
     pushcart  
 baby coat, matinee coat  
 baby pacifier, comforter; dummy  
 baby-sitter, baby-watcher; sitter-in  
 backdrop, drop-scene  
 back in civies, bowler-hatted  
 back kitchen, scullery  
 back of car seat, squab  
 backside, fanny  
 back to business, back to our muttons  
 backwards, arsy-versy  
 bacon, streaky bacon  
 bad egg, bad hat  
 bad end, sticky finish  
 bad form, not on; off  
 badger's burrow, set  
 bad-tempered, liverish; stroppey  
 bagful, shopping-bag  
 baggage, luggage  
 baggage car, van  
 baked, cooked  
 baked potato, jacket potato  
 bakery, bakehouse  
 baking powder, rising powder  
 baking powder biscuit, scone  
 ballot counter/inspector, scrutineer  
 ball-point pen, biro  
 balls, ballocks  
 balls, goolies  
 balmy, barmy  
 baloney!, all my eye and Betty Martin!;  
     codswallop; rats!  
 Band-Aid, Elastoplast; plaster  
 bang (hit), bash  
 bangs, fringe  
 bang-up, slap-up  
 banked, superelevated  
 bank loan, overdraft  
 bankroll, sheaf  
 banned, warned off  
 Bar Association, Law Society  
 barber shop, hairdresser's  
     a bargain, snip  
 barge, keel  
 bartender, barman  
 bartender's assistant, pot-boy  
 baseboard, skirting/skirting-board  
 basin, dock

- basket-shaped boat, coracle  
 bastard, basket; sod  
 bathe, bath  
 bathing suit, bathing costume; swimming costume  
 bathrobe, dressing gown  
 bathtub, bath  
 batter, batsman  
 battery, accumulator  
 bawl out, bollick  
 bawl (someone) out, tear a strip off (someone)  
 beach, sea  
 beach pebbles, shingle  
 beak (nose), conk  
 be all one can do, take (one) all (one's) time  
 bean (head), loaf  
 bean pole, pea-stick  
 (be) a prostitute, be on the game  
 (be) a prostitute, be on the knock  
 beat, give (someone) gyp  
 beat, manor  
 beat, shot about  
 beat, whacked  
 be a television addict, have square eyes  
 beat it, hook it  
 beat it, leg it  
 beauty parlor, hairdresser's  
 be a wise guy, come the acid  
 be baffled, go spare  
 be bumped off, get the chop  
 become, gone  
 bed, kip  
 a bed of roses, beer and skittles  
 be down on, have a down on  
 beep, pip  
 beer, pint  
 beer (strong), stout  
 beet(s), beetroot  
 before you can say 'Jack Robinson,' as soon as look at you; as soon as say knife  
 be found out, be blown  
 befuddled, fogged; tosticated  
 begin, come on to  
 (be) had, (be) done  
 behind, behindhand  
 be jumpy, get the wind up  
 be laying for, have a rod in pickle for  
 bellhop, hotel page; page  
 bellyful, sickener  
 beltway, ring-road or ringway  
 bender, blind  
 bend over backwards, fall over backwards  
 benefice, living  
 be on (someone's) side, play for (someone's) side  
 be quick, look slippery!  
 be reading, have a read  
 beside, at the side of  
 best man, supporter  
 bet across the board, have a quid each way  
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 Big Dipper, Plough  
 big fib, oner  
 biggest bargains, keenest prices  
 bike, push-bike  
 bill, account  
 bill, note  
 billboard, hoarding  
 billfold, notecase; pocketbook  
 billiard parlor, billiard-saloon  
 billion, milliard  
 bill of lading, consignment note  
 billy, baton  
 billy, truncheon  
 binge, razzle  
 bit, screw  
 bit, spot  
 bitchy, narky  
 biting, shrewd  
 biting cold, as cold as charity  
 bit the hand that feeds one, quarrel with one's bread and butter  
 blabbermouth, pedlar  
 blackball, pip  
 blackberry, bramble  
 blackjack (weapon), cosh  
 blackjack (game), pontoon  
 black magic, devilry  
 Black or regular?, Black or white?  
 blacktop, macadam; tarmac  
 blend word, portmanteau  
 blimp, stuffed shirt  
 blind drunk, pissed  
 blinker, winker  
 block, tranche  
 blow, blue  
 blow, staggerer  
 blow one's top, do one's nut  
 blowtorch, blowlamp; brazing lamp; thermic lance  
 blow up at (someone), blow (someone) up  
 blue-collar, cloth-cap  
 blues (sadness), hip  
 blue streak, nineteen to the dozen  
 bluff, fluff  
 board, join  
 boarder, P.G.  
 boat pole, quant  
 bobby pin, hair grip; kirby grip  
 bodyguard, minder  
 bomb (a target), prang

bond, loan share/stock  
 boner, howler  
 bone to pick, crow to pick  
 bone up, gen up  
 boo, barrack  
 booboo, bloomer  
 boob tube, goggle-box  
 booby prize, wooden spoon  
 boodle, pot  
 bookie, turf accountant  
 bookie's joint, (The) Corner  
 bookmaker, commission agent  
 bookworm, mug  
 boor, boulder  
 boost, kiss of life  
 booty, pewter  
 border, frontier  
 boss, gaffer  
 boss, governor  
 bosun, Spithead nightingale  
**botanical and zoological names** 393  
 bother, moider  
 bottom, inside (of a double-decker bus)  
 bowel movement, motion  
 bowlegged, bandy-legged  
 bowl over, knock acock  
 bowl over, pull up  
 bow to (someone), give (someone) best  
 box office, pay-box  
 boycott, black  
 bracelets, darbies  
 bracket, band; slice; tranche  
 brackets (parentheses) usage 380  
 brakeman, brakesman  
 brakeman, guard  
 brass tacks, put-to  
 brawl, dust-up  
 bread-and-butter letter, Collins; roofer  
 bread and cheese, ploughman's lunch  
 bread box, bread bin  
 bread strips, soldiers  
 break in, run in  
 break things off, part brass rags  
 bribe, dab in the hand; dropsy  
 bricklayer, brickie; bricky  
 bridle trail, gallop  
 brigadier general, brigadier  
 bring, fetch; make  
 bring charges against (someone), have (someone) up  
 bring (someone) up to date, put (someone) in the picture  
 brisk, parky  
 brisk, rattling  
 Britain, Briton, Bristish, English, etc. 394  
 Briticisms 2-4  
 broad, Judy  
 broadcloth, poplin  
 Broadway, West End

broil, grill  
 broke, stony  
 broken sizes, odd sizes  
 brood of pheasants, nide  
 brook, beck  
 brush aside, put by  
 brush (something) off, play (something) to leg  
 buccaneer, filibuster  
 buck (money), bradbury  
 buckle under, lie down under  
 buddy, mate  
 buffet, fork supper  
 bug, insect  
 bug (someone), get on (someone's) wick  
 build, throw out  
 building, house  
 building inspector, surveyor  
 building permit, planning permission  
 built to order, purpose-built  
 bulb, teat  
 bull, cock  
 bulletin board, notice board; station calendar  
 bulletproof, bandit-proof  
 bullhorn, loud hailer  
 bum, yobbo  
 bum check, dud cheque; stumer  
 bump, off-load  
 bump, ramp  
 bumper, fender  
 bumper to bumper, nose to tail  
 bumpkin, joskin  
 bun, bap; bread roll  
 bunch, lot  
 bunch, shopping-bag  
 burglary, raid  
 burlap, hessian  
 burn, brew up  
 bury the hatchet, sink differences  
 bus fare zone limit, fare stage  
 business, custom  
 business, palaver  
 business suit, lounge suit  
 bust, damp squib  
 bust, frost  
 busy, engaged  
 busybody, nosey-parker  
 but, bar  
 butcher shop, family butcher  
 butt, end; snout; stump  
 bye-bye, ta-ta  
 by-pass, ring-road; ringway

## C

cabbage (young), spring greens  
 cabinet member, minister  
 caboose, brake-van

- caboose, guard's van  
 cadge, mump  
 call off, cry off  
 call out, give (someone) a shout  
 campaign stroll, walkabout  
 campus, college grounds  
 campus, court; quad  
 can, tin  
 Canadian bacon, back bacon  
 candle, tolly  
 candy, sweets  
 candy (chewy), stickjaw  
 candy store, confectioner's; sweet-shop  
 canine distemper, distemper  
 canker sore, ulcer  
 canned pressed beef, corned beef  
 canned spiel, potten lecture  
 can (privy), jakes  
**cant terms** 390  
 cap and gown, academics  
 captain, skipper  
 car, wag(g)on  
 care, mind  
 cargo, freight  
 carnival slide, helter-skelter  
 carpenter, joiner  
 carpet tack, tin tack  
 carryall, holdall  
 car seat (back of), squab  
 case, sus out  
 cash, encash  
 cast-iron, copper-bottomed  
 castles in the air, moonshine  
 castrate, doctor  
 cat, mog/moggy/moggie  
 catch, snag  
 catch hell, get one's head in one's hand;  
     get the stick  
 catch on, take on  
 catch on to, tumble to  
 catch on to, twig  
 cathedral head, dean  
 catkins, lambs' tails  
 cattle gate, kissing gate  
 cattleman, stock-breeder  
 cauliflower ear, thick ear  
 ceiling electric fan, punka(h)  
 cent, bean  
 centerboard, sliding keel  
 chain store, multiple shops  
 chambermaid, housemaid  
 chamber pot, commode; thunder-mug  
 chamois, leather  
 chamois, wash leather  
 chance, show  
 change pocket, ticket pocket  
 chaotic, shambolic  
 chapel, bethel  
 character, blighter; bod  
 charge, book  
 charge, put down  
 charge account, account  
 charter member, foundation member  
 chatter, natter  
 cheap, trumpery  
 cheap cigarette, gasper  
 cheap fruit cake, schoolboy cake  
 cheaply, on the cheap  
 cheap novel, shocker  
 cheap wine, plonk  
 cheated, dished  
 check, bill; register; tick  
 check, vet  
 checkers, draughts  
 checking account, current account;  
     running account  
 check off, tick off  
 checkroom, left luggage office  
 cheek, sauce  
 cheesecake, maid of honour  
 cheesecloth, muslin  
 cheese it!, nix!  
 cheesy, ropy  
 chewy candy, stickjaw  
 chicken, funky  
 chicory, endive  
 chief counsel, leader  
 Chief Justice, Lord Chancellor  
 chief prosecuting attorney (act as), lead for  
     the Crown  
 children's traffic guide, lollipop  
     man/woman  
 child's bib, feeder  
 child's nurse, nanny  
 chilly, parky  
 chimney corner, ingle-nook  
 Chin up!, Keep your pecker up!  
 chip in, pay one's shot  
 chop, cutlet  
 chopped meat, mince  
 chow, tack; toke  
 Christmas carolers, waits  
 church aisle, aisle  
 Church of England, C. of E.  
 cigarette, fag  
 cigarette butt, dog-end  
 cigarette paper, skin  
 cigar store, tobacconist's shop  
 cinch, doddle  
 cinch, easy meat; snip  
 circulation, general post  
 cited for bravery, mentioned  
     in dispatches  
 citizen, subject  
 city editor, news editor  
 city limits, town boundary  
 clamp, cramp  
 clapboard, weather-board

class, form  
 class, street  
 classified ads, small ad  
 cleaning woman, daily woman; Mrs. Mop/p  
 clean up, turn out  
 clear up, fine down  
 clerk, assistant  
 clipping, cutting  
 close, level  
 closed season, close season  
 closed truck, van  
 close haircut, short back and sides  
 close order drill, square-bashing  
 closet, cupboard  
 closing time!, time!  
 clothespin, clothes-peg  
 clothespole, clothes-prop  
 cloture, closure; guillotine  
 cloverleaf, spaghetti junction  
 clutter, lumber  
 coal freighter, collier  
 coarse invective, billingsgate  
 cockroach, black-beetle  
 coddle, wrap in cotton wool  
 coed, mixed  
 coffee break (morning), elevenses  
 collar button, collar stud  
 collect call, transferred charge call  
 college department, faculty  
 college entrance examination, A-levels  
 college graduate, graduate  
 college monitor, proctor  
 college servant, gyp  
 college servant, skip  
 college teacher, don  
 collision, crash  
 comb (fine), toothcomb  
 come across, stump up  
 comedy team, cross-talk comedians  
 come on!, get out of it!; give over!  
 come out on top, come top  
 come to a lot, come expensive  
 come up roses, come up trumps  
 comforter, eiderdown  
 comfort station, public convenience  
 coming along, in train  
 coming attractions, dreadful warning  
 commencement, degree day  
 commit an error, misfield  
 committee, working party  
 common, coarse  
 common herd, rack  
 common-room, combination-room  
 common stock, ordinary shares  
 commotion, kerfuffle  
 community college, polytechnic  
 commutation ticket, season ticket  
 commuting town, dormitory  
 company picnic, bean-feast

the competition, the opposition  
 complete, full out  
 concede, agree  
 concert master, leader  
 condemnation, compulsory purchase  
 conductor, guard  
 cone, cornet  
 confidence game, confidence trick  
 confine to quarters, gate  
 confused, skimble-scamble  
 conglomerate, group of companies  
 congratulate, felicitate  
 conk out, pack up  
 connected, through  
 conscientious objector, conchy  
 consent decree, agreed verdict  
 Conservative Jew, Reform Jew  
 consider (someone) to be, write (someone)  
     down as  
 construction, construe  
 construction worker, navvy  
 contact, make one's number with  
 contemptible, bloody  
 contemptible, fiddling  
 contract, private treaty  
 contractor, lumper  
 control room, listening room  
 conveniences, amenities  
 convergence theory 2-4  
 conversant, au fait  
 convertible top, drop-head  
 convertible top, hood  
 cook book, cookery book  
 cookie, biscuit  
 cool, fab; gear; kinky  
 cop, bobby; bogey (bogy); rozzer; slop  
 cops, (the) Old Bill  
 copy editor, sub-editor  
 corn, maize  
 corned beef, salt beef  
 cornerstone, foundation-stone  
 corn meal, Indian meal  
 corporate charter, memorandum and  
     articles of association  
 corporation, company; limited company  
 correspondence course, postal course  
 corridor, passage  
 cost estimate, bill of quantity  
 cost-of-living contract, threshold agreement  
 costs, costings  
 costume, livery  
 couch, divan  
 couch (S-shaped couch), sociable  
 councilman, councillor  
 counsel (legal), consultant  
 counterclockwise,  
     withershins/widdershins  
 counterfeit, forged  
 counterfeiter, coiner

countrywide election, general election  
 county fair, agricultural show  
 court sessions, assizes  
 court stenographer, shorthand writer  
 conveniences, offices  
 cover, mark  
 coverage, cover  
 coverall, boiler suit; overall  
 covered approach to doorway, porch  
 cover with a large quantity, dollop  
 cover with soil, earth  
 Coxey's army, Fred Karno's army  
 cracked, crackers  
 cracker, bickie; biscuit  
 cram, sap; swot  
 crammer, grinder  
 cram school, crammer's  
 crane fly, daddy-longlegs  
 crank, starting handle  
 crank, wind  
 crankcase, sump  
 crap (nonsense), balls  
 crash land (an aircraft), prang  
 crazed, up the pole  
 crazy, mental; round the bend  
 crazy about, mad on  
 creek, fleet  
 creel, corf  
 crew cut, close crop  
 crib, cot  
 cricket team, eleven  
**cricket terms** 395  
 crimes of violence, malicious wounding  
 criminal court judge, recorder  
 criticize, slag  
 croak, nuff it  
 crone, faggot  
 crooked, bent  
 crookedly, skew-whiff  
 crotch, crutch  
 crouton, sippet  
 crow, humble pie  
 crowd, shoal  
 cruise, crawl  
 cruise for a pickup, gutter-crawl  
 crummy, scrotty; tinpot  
 crunch, put-to  
 crush, spifflicate  
 crusher, one in the eye  
 crystal, glass  
 cubbyhole, cubby  
 cuff link, sleeve link  
 cunt, fanny  
 cupcake, fairy cake  
 cup of tea, cuppa  
 curling iron, curling tongs  
 currant cookie, garibaldi  
**currency** 382  
 curtain material, soft furnishings

curve, bend  
 custard sauce, custard  
 custodian, keeper  
 custody, wardship  
 custom made, bespoke  
 cut-and-dried, straightforward  
 cutaway, tailcoat  
 cut down to size, debag  
 cutie, popsie

## D

dad, governor  
 dago red (wine), red biddy  
 dainty, dinky  
 dam, barrage; weir  
 damages, compensation  
 dame, bird  
 dammed, flipping  
 damn!, bother  
 damnable, ruddy  
 damned, bally; bleeding; blind; blinking;  
     bloody; blooming; dashed; flaming;  
     jiggered; rattling  
 damn it!, blast!  
 dandruff, scurf  
 daylight savings time, summer time  
 day nursery, crêche  
 day's route, country round  
 dead, dead-alive  
 dead, float  
 dead broke, skint  
 dead drunk, up the pole  
 dead-end street, cul-de-sac  
 deadline, time-limit  
 deaf, cloth-eared  
 deal, do  
 dealer, monger  
 dealer in stocks, stockjobber  
 dean, doyen; head  
 Dear..., My Dear...  
 decal, transfer  
 decarbonize, decoke  
 decimal point, spot  
 deck, pack  
 declare, go  
 declare insolvent, hammer  
 deduction, allowance; relief  
 deduction (from wages), stoppage  
 deep-dish pie, pie  
 defroster, demister  
 degree below 32 degrees Fahrenheit,  
     degree of frost  
 degree removed, remove  
 delay, hold-up  
 delightful, absolutely sweet  
 delivery man, roundsman  
 dell, dingle  
 demonstration, demo

den, snuggery  
 denatured alcohol, methylated spirit  
 dentist's office, surgery  
 dentist's office hours, surgery  
 department store, departmental store  
 deposit slip, credit slip; paying-in slip  
 deprecate oneself, cry stinking fish  
 depreciation, writing down  
 deputy churchwarden, sidesman  
 derby (hat), bowler  
 desert, leave in the lurch  
 desist, pack it in  
 dessert, afters; pudding; sweet  
 destroy, perish  
 detail, second  
 detour, diversion  
 diamond industry, Hatton Garden  
 diaper, nappy  
 diarrhea, gippy tummy  
 dibs on...!, bags I!  
 die laughing, fall about laughing  
 diet, bant; slim  
**differences between British and American English 1-4, 374-381**  
 dig up, rake up  
 a dime a dozen, two (ten) a penny  
 dime novel, penny dreadful; shilling shocker  
 diner, pull-up  
 dining car, restaurant car  
 diplomat, diplomatist  
 directional signal, trafficator; winker  
 director, producer  
 dirt floor, earthen floor; earth floor  
 dirty (indecent), rude  
 disagreeable, nasty  
 disappear, go missing  
 disbar, strike off  
 discharge, demob  
 discounter, bill broker  
 dish (desirable woman), crumpet  
 dish made of leftovers, resurrection pie  
 dishonest, bent  
 dishonorable discharge, dismissal with grace  
 dishpan, washing-up bowl  
 dishrag, wash-cloth  
 dish towel, tea-towel; washing-up cloth  
 disinfect, stove up  
 dislike, down  
 dislodge, unharbour  
 dismissal, sack  
 dismissal with bonus, golden handshake  
 dismount, alight  
 display one's credentials, set out one's stall  
 a dispute, argy-bargy  
 district, constituency  
 district attorney, public prosecutor  
 disturb, put (someone) off  
 dither, kerfuffle; way  
 dive, night-cellar

divided highway, dual carriageway  
 dividend, divi; divvy  
 divinity school, theological college  
 dizzy spell, giddy fit; turn  
 do business, trade  
 dock, wharf  
 doctor covering for another, locum  
 doctor's office, surgery  
 doctor's office hours, surgery  
 dodge, jink  
 doesn't hold a candle to, is not a patch on  
 a dog's age, donkey's years  
 dog tag, identity disc  
 doll up, tart up  
 domestic, inland  
 domestic abuse, wife-battering  
 domestic employment agency, registry  
 domestic monopoly, sheltered trade  
 done dirt, hard done by  
 done in, whacked  
 Do Not Enter, No Entry  
 don't exaggerate!, draw it mild!  
 don't let it bother you!, not to worry!  
 don't mention it!, pleasure!  
 don't talk nonsense, go to Bath!  
 doorman, porter  
 door-to-door salesman, doorstep salesman;  
 knocker  
 dope (fool), berk; jobbernowl; juggins; nit;  
 poop  
 dopey, dozy (dozey)  
 dormitory, hall of residence  
 do (someone) dirt, do (someone) down;  
 do (someone) in the eye  
 do (someone) in, do (someone) up; scupper  
 do the dishes, wash up  
 double, large  
 double bed room, double-bedded  
 double boiler, double saucepan  
 double dealer, twicer  
 double digits (ten or more), double figures  
 double portion, double  
 double whole note, breve  
 dough (money), brass; dibs; lolly; L.S.D.;  
 oof; (the) ready; rhino  
 down at the heels, down at heel  
 drafting room, drawing office  
 drag, fag  
 drag, grind  
 drain, run-away  
 dram, tot  
 drapery material, soft furnishings  
 dress, frock  
 dressed to kill, dressed to the nines  
 dressing-down, wiggling  
 drip, weed  
 drive, motor  
 drive (cattle), hoy  
 driver's license, driving license

driver's rest area, lay-by  
 driver's seat, driving seat  
 drive shaft, propeller shaft  
 drive (someone) nuts, send (someone) spare  
 driveway, drive  
 drizzle, mizzle  
 drone on and on, jaw-jaw  
 drop, slide  
 drop dead, drop down dead  
 drudgery, donkey-work  
 drug on the market, drug in the market  
 drumming up trade, huggery  
 dry goods, Manchester  
 dry goods store, draper's shop  
 dry ice, hot ice  
**dry measure** 383  
 dub, rabbit  
 dud, damp squib  
 duds, dunnage  
 due date, quarter-day  
 dues, subscription  
 dull, subfusc  
 dumb, wet  
 dumbwaiter, service lift  
 dummy bomb, proxy bomb  
 dump, tip  
 dumps (the), (the) hump  
 dumpster, skivvy-bin  
 dune, dene  
 duplicate, roneo  
 dust balls, slut's wool

## E

early in the picture, early on  
 earn, knock up  
 easement, wayleave  
 easy pickings, money for jam  
 eat high off the hog, live like a fighting cock  
 eat like a pig, pig it  
 eats, tuck  
 eccentric, cranky  
 effective date, tax point  
 eggplant, aubergine  
 egg roll, pancake roll  
 eggs from uncooped hens, free-range eggs  
 eiderdown quilt, duvet  
 eighth note, quaver  
 elastic knit fabric, stockinet  
 elder (the), major  
 elect, return  
 election day, polling-day  
 electrical socket, point  
 electric cord, flex  
 electric heater, electric fire  
 electric power source, mains  
 electric tricycle, invalid carriage

elevator, lift  
 elimination contest, knock-out  
 emcee, compère  
 employ, engage  
 employee in charge of supplies, storekeeper  
 empty, peckish  
 endless discussion, jaw-jaw  
 engineer, engine driver  
 engineer's platform, footplate  
 English (billiards), side; spin  
 English Channel, Silver Streak  
 English horn, cor anglais  
 engrave, dye stamp  
 engraving, copperplate printing  
 enlist, take the shilling  
 enlisted men, other ranks  
 enormously, thumping  
 entail, attract  
 enter university, go up  
 enthusiastic, mustard-keen  
 entitled to the use of, free of  
 entrance, entry  
 entrants, intake  
 eraser, rubber  
 escalator, moving stairway  
 escritoire, davenport  
 estate manager, bailiff  
 even, level; square  
 even money, evens  
 even Stephen, honours even; level  
 pegging  
 everything but the kitchen sink, everything that opens and shuts  
 everything's hunky-dory, everything in the garden's lovely  
 everything thrown in, all in  
 excelsior, wood-wool  
 except, bar  
 excise tax, purchase tax; V.A.T.  
 exclamation point, exclamation mark  
 excursionist, tripper  
 executive, director  
 the Executive Committee, (the) Executive  
 executive vice president, managing director  
 exemption, relief  
 exhaust, fag; knock up  
 exhaust fan, extractor fan  
 exhibition game, friendly  
 exhibitor, renter  
 Exit, Way Out  
 expel, sack; send down  
 expel temporarily from university, rusticate  
 expenses, outgoings  
 expensive, pricey  
 expensive suburb, gin and Jaguar belt  
 explain the situation to (someone), put (someone) in the picture  
 express, fast

**408 British English, A to Zed**

extension, flex  
 extension courses, extra-mural studies  
 extension school, school of further education  
 extortionate rent, rack-rent  
 extra, gash  
 extra measure, long pull  
 extra measure, pull  
 extremely slow, dead slow  
 extreme side seat, slip  
 exult riotously, maffick

**F**

fabulous, snorting  
 face, mug  
 face annihilation, be on a hiding to nothing  
 face cloth, flannel  
 fact-finding board, court of inquiry  
 factor, bill broker  
 factory, works  
 factory whistle, hooter  
 faddish, trendy  
 fagged, spun  
 faintest, foggiest  
 fair, fête  
 fair-haired boy, blue-eyed boy  
 fake, duff  
 fall, slide  
 fall on one's face, come a purler  
 fall on one's face, put up a black  
 family fruit and vegetable garden, kitchen garden  
 fanatic puritan, wowser  
 farmhand, agricultural labourer  
 farm machinery, dead stock  
 farm manager, bailiff  
 farmstead, steading  
 farsighted, long-sighted  
 fascinating, riveting  
 fashionable, trendy  
 fastback, slant-tailed  
 fasten, pop  
 fat and squat, fubby  
 father, pater  
 fatty, podge  
 faucet, tap  
 favored, tipped  
 favorite (horse racing), pot  
 feeding, feed  
 feel below par, feeling not quite the thing  
 feel like, feel  
 fee(s), dues  
 fellow, bean; cove  
 few in number, thin on the ground  
 fey, airy-fairy  
 fiasco, lash-up; nonsense  
 fib, taradiddle  
 fiberglass, glass fibre

field, ground  
 field hockey, hockey  
 fieldsman, fielder  
 fifth wheel, gooseberry  
 figure out, sus out  
 figures of speech differences 378-379  
 fill, make up; stop; top up  
 fillers, balaam  
 fill in, gen up  
 fill out, fill in  
**financial terms** 383  
 finder, wing  
 fine!, lovely!  
 fine, sconce  
 fine comb, toothcomb  
 fine gravel, grit  
 fingerprints, dabs  
 finicky, dainty  
 finish, pack it in; put paid to  
 fink, scug  
 fire, sack  
 firecracker, banger  
 fire department, fire brigade  
 fire insurance company office, fire office  
 fireman's platform, footplate  
 fireplace implements, fire-irons  
 fire screen, fire-guard  
 first balcony, dress circle  
 first-class mail, letter post  
 first rate, tip-top  
 fiscal year, financial year  
 fish and seafood, fish  
 fish for small eels, sniggle  
 fish sticks, fish fingers  
 fish store, fishmonger's  
 fish story, fishing story  
 fish tank, stew  
 five, fiver  
 five hundred dollars/pounds, monkey  
 fix, nobble  
 fixed, straightened out  
 fixtures, fitments; fittings  
 flair, panache  
 flank, skirt  
 flashlight, torch  
 flashy, flash  
 flat, puncture  
 flat cakes, dampers  
 flattery, flannel  
 flatulent, windy  
 flood, spate  
 floor, pair  
 floor lamp, standard lamp  
 floorwalker, shop-walker  
 flophouse, doss-house  
 flout, drive a coach and horses through  
 flunk, plough  
 fluorescent lighting, strip lighting  
 fly, flies

flying bomb, doodle-bug  
 fold, put down; put the shutters up  
 folding seat, tip-up seat  
 fondle, nurse  
 food cupboard, meat-safe  
**food names** 393  
 fool, goat; juggins; muggins  
 fool around, rag  
 foot (far end), bottom  
 ford, watersplash  
 forest riding-path, ride  
 for sale, under offer  
 for that matter, for the matter of that  
 40th wedding anniversary, ruby wedding  
 fortune, bomb  
 for (used for), in aid of  
 forward, redirect  
 foul line, crease  
 found out, (be) blown  
 Four Corners, Four Wents  
 4-F, C3; unfit  
 foursome, fourball  
 frame house, wooden house  
 frank, rude  
 free, gash  
 free-for-all, Donnybrook  
 freight, goods  
 freight elevator, hoist  
 French cuff, double cuff  
 fresh fish, wet fish  
 freshman, fresher  
 friends and relations, kith and kin  
 fright, guy  
 frills, tatt  
 fringe benefits, perks  
 fritter away one's time, tatt  
 frog, rose  
 from the word go, from the off  
 front desk, reception  
 front yard, forecourt  
 frozen food, frosted food  
 fruit and vegetable pushcart vendor,  
     costermonger; pearly  
 fruit and vegetable store, greengrocer's  
 fruit course at end of meal, dessert  
 fruit merchant, fruiterer  
 fry, fry-up  
 fuck, shag  
 full approval, full marks  
 full of pep, cracking  
 fund-raising campaign, appeal  
 funny (peculiar), rum  
 furnish, issue  
 fuss, kerfuffle  
 futile, fiddling

## G

gabble, waffle

gag, funniosity; rag  
 gain, rise; win  
 gallows tree, gallows  
 galoshes, snowboots  
 gamble, flutter; game  
 game, gammy; match  
 gander (glance), dekkoo  
 gander (look-see), recce; shuffy  
 gang foreman, ganger  
 garbage, gash  
 garbage can, dustbin  
 garbage dump, refuse tip  
 garbage heap, midden  
 garbage man, dustman  
 garbage truck, dustcart  
 garters, suspenders  
 gasoline, petrol  
 gate, barrier; push  
 gaudy, twopence coloured  
 gauge, bore  
 gear, traps  
 gearshift, gear-lever  
 GED, G.C.E.  
 gee!, cool!; cor!  
 geezer, josser  
 gelatin-type dessert, jelly  
 general delivery, poste restante  
 generator, dynamo  
 genuine, pukka  
 German Shepherd dog, Alsatian  
 get along with, get on with  
 get a move on, look smart!  
 get anywhere with, get much change  
     out of  
 get a rise out of, take a rise out of; take the  
     rise out of  
 get away with it, slime  
 get a word in edgewise, put one's hoof in  
 get back on, get one's own back on  
 get by, rub along  
 get down to brass tacks, come to the horses  
 get even with, get upsides with  
 get forty winks, have a doss  
 get going, get one's skates on; get on with  
     it!; get stuck in; get weaving; pull one's  
     socks up  
 get in (someone's) hair, get up (someone's)  
     nose  
 Get lost!, On your bike!  
 get moving, push along  
 get out of an automobile, debus  
 get settled, smooth in  
 get smashed, go for six  
 get (someone) out, dismiss  
 get (someone) riled up, get across (someone)  
 get (someone's) back up, put (someone's)  
     back up  
 get some shuteye, put one's head down  
 get something going, put up the hare

get somewhat tight, have one over the eight  
 get sore (angry), go spare  
 get the best of, get the better of  
 get the better of, score off  
 get the gate, get the chop  
 get things started, open the bowling  
 get this!, wait for it!  
 get tired of, go off  
 getup, rig-out  
 giant supermarket, hyper-market  
 gimpy, dot and go one  
 gin, mother's ruin; squareface  
 gingersnap, ginger biscuit (ginger nut)  
 gin mill, gin-stop  
 girdle, belt; roll-on  
 girlfriend, bint  
 Girl Scout, Girl Guide  
 give (someone) hell, give (someone) fits;  
     give (someone) some stick  
 give (someone) his pink slip/walking  
     papers, give (someone) his cards  
 give (someone) the hook, give (someone)  
     the bird  
 giving services for board and lodging, au  
     pair  
 gloomy, dull  
 gloomy Gus, dismal Jimmy; Jeremiah  
 glum, liverish  
 glutton, stodge  
 go AWOL, go spare  
 gob, whack  
 go (become), come over  
 go-between, linkman  
 goddamned, bleeding; bloody  
 goddamned fool, b.f.  
 god God!, 'strewth!  
 God help us!, save the mark!  
 God's country, blighty  
 God willing, D.V. or W.P.  
 gofer, dog's body  
 go first, bat first; take first knock  
 going on, coming; rising  
 going over, stonk  
 going places, on the up and up  
 going too far, (a) bit thick; over the top  
 go into bankruptcy, put up the shutters  
 goldbrick, scrimshank; skive  
 gondola car, open goods-wagon; truck  
 good and bad, good in parts  
 good at, hot on  
 good eats, scoff  
 Good heavens!, Crikey!  
 good heavens!, stone the crows!  
 good shot!, shooting!  
 good stuff, good value  
 good thing, good job  
 goof, boob  
 goof off, dodge the column; mike; slack;  
     swing it; swing the lead

goofy, bonkers  
 gooseberry, goosegog  
 goose egg, duck  
 gooseneck lamp, flexible (table) lamp  
 gosh!, cool!, cor!  
 go steady, walk out  
 go the limit, make all the running  
 go to bed early, have an early night  
 go to the bathroom, spend a penny  
 go to the dogs, go to the bad  
 go to the races, go racing  
 got the message, the penny dropped  
 government bonds, gilts  
 Government Insurance System, National  
     Insurance  
 government lottery bond, Premium bond  
 government official, politician  
 Government Printing Office, her Majesty's  
     Stationery Office  
 government publication, Paper  
 governor, supremo  
 grab bag, lucky-dip  
 grade, form; standard  
 grade crossing, level crossing  
 grade (hill), gradient  
 grade school, elementary school  
 graduate, come down; pass out;  
     post-graduate  
 graduate from, leave  
 graft, backhander  
 grain, corn  
 grass shoulder, verge  
 gravel, beach  
 gravy boat, sauce-boat  
 great!, lovely!  
 great, rare; ripping; top-hold; topping;  
     whacko!  
 great fun, all the fun of the fair  
 Greek, double Dutch  
 greenhouse, glasshouse  
 green thumb, green fingers  
 Greenwich mean time, G.M.T.  
 green woolen cloth, Kendal green  
 griddle, girdle  
 grind, aesthete; kibble; mug; sap  
 grit, sand  
 ground, earth  
 group, lot; set  
 grub (food), tack; toke; bait  
 grudge match, needle match  
 gruesome, curly  
 guard, keeper  
 guck, jollop  
 guest book, visitors' book  
 guest room, spare room  
 gullible person, mug  
 gurgle, guggle  
 guy, bean; beggar; bloke; cove; johnny;  
     stick

gym suit, gym slip

## H

haberdashery, draper's shop  
 hairpin, hair grip  
 hair spray, lacquer  
 half a minute (right away), half a tick  
 half-cocked, at half-cock  
 halfnote, minim  
 half past, half  
 ham, gammon  
 hamburger, Wimpy  
 hamburger roll, bap  
 handball, fives  
 handle, manhandle  
 handwriting, hand  
 handyman, jack  
 handyman, odd man  
 hang around, mouch/mooch  
 hang up, put the 'phone down  
 hanky-panky, jiggery-pokery  
 happy as a clam, happy as a sandboy  
 hard, shrewd  
 hard-boiled, hard-baked; hard-cooked  
 hard candy, boiled sweets  
 hard labor, hard  
 hard liquor, spirits  
 hard-luck guy, lame duck  
 hard sauce, brandy-butter; rum-butter  
 hard up, in low water; (in) Queer Street  
 hardware, fixings  
 hardware dealer, ironmonger  
 harum scarum, rackety  
 hash, shepherd's pie  
 have a ball, have a rave-up  
 have a general election, go to the country  
 have an affair, have it off  
 have a screw loose, have a slate loose  
 have high hopes, fancy one's chances  
 have it easy, have jam on it  
 have no use for, have no time for  
 have plenty to do, have enough on one's plate  
 have sexual intercourse, go to bed  
 have (someone) at one's mercy, have (someone) on toast  
 have (something) going, have (something) on  
 have (something) lined up, have (something) in one's eye  
 have the inside dope, know the form  
 have your cake and eat it too, have the penny and the bun  
 having achieved one's goal, home and dry  
 having a liquor license, licenced  
 having a telephone, on the telephone  
 having made a start, off the mark  
 hawthorn, may

haystack, rick  
 head (beginning), top  
 headboard, bed-board  
 head cheese, brawn  
 headfirst, neck and crop  
 headlight, headlamp  
 headliner, topline  
 head over heels, arse over tip  
 head shrinker, trick cyclist  
 heaping, heaped  
 hearing aid, deaf-aid  
 heart's content, top of one's bent  
 heater, fire  
 heaven, Land of the Leal  
 heavy, double  
 heavy cream, double cream  
 heavy food, stodge  
 heavy linen, dowlas  
 heavy muslin, dowlas  
 heavy work, rough  
 hedge clippings, brash  
 held for questioning, assisting the police  
 hell, bean; rocket  
 hello!, hi!  
 hell of a hurry, split of a hurry  
 hell raiser, rip  
 hellraiser, tearaway  
 help wanted, situations vacant; vacancies  
 hem and haw, hum and ha  
 het up, in a flap; strung up  
 hey!, hi!, hullo!  
 hi!, watcher!  
 hideaway, bolt-hole  
 hideaway, hidey-hole  
 hiding place, hide  
 hierarchy, totem  
 highbrow, Bloomsbury  
 high gear, top gear  
 high rise, multi-storey  
 high-school graduate, school-leaver  
 high-strung, highly-strung  
 high tension tower, pylon  
 highway robbery, daylight robbery  
 high-wheeler, penny-farthing  
 hillside woods, hanger  
 hire, engage  
 his plane was shot down, he bought the farm  
 hitch, hiccup  
 hit (success), knock  
 hoarse, roopy  
 hoax, leg-pull  
 hobo, layabout  
 hock (paw), pop  
 hold one's own, stand one's own  
 hold the bag, hold the baby  
 hold your horses!, wait for it!  
 hole in one's sock, potato  
 holy mackerel!, blimey!

home away from home, home from home  
 home economics, domestic science  
 homely, plain  
 home rule, devolution  
 homework, prep  
 homey, homely  
 homosexual, bent; ginger-beer  
 honey, duck; love  
 honky-tonk, gaff  
 hoodlum, hooligan  
 hood (of car), bonnet  
 hope chest, bottom drawer  
 hopeless, clueless  
 hop sack, bin  
 hops kiln, oast  
 hop to it, jump to it  
 horny, randy  
 horse around, cod  
 horse chestnut, conker  
 horse chestnut game, conkers  
 horselaugh, laugh like a drain  
 horse of a different color, another pair of shoes  
 horse sense, gump  
 horse show, gymkhana  
 horse stall, loose-box  
 horse trader, coper  
 horsie, gee  
 hot, fallen off the back of a lorry  
 hot and bothered, mithered  
 hotel apartment, service flat  
 hotel bootblack, boots  
 hot-water bottle, stomach warmer  
 hot water heater, immersion heater  
 house call, domiciliary  
 house (dormitory), college  
 household refuse, dust  
 house-sitter, homeminder  
 how'd it go?, good party?  
 howdy!, watcher!  
 humbug, gammon  
 humdinger, snorter  
 humorous comic, comic  
 hunky-dory, tickety-boo  
 hunt, shoot  
 hunter, gun  
 hunting-lodge, shooting-box  
 hut, bothy  
 hyphenated, double-barrelled

## I

I beg to say that..., I have to say that...  
 I bet, I'll be bound  
 iceberg lettuce, web lettuce  
 ice cream, ice  
 ice cube, lock of ice  
 I claim!, bags I!  
 idea, wheeze

I dibsy!, bags I!  
 idiot box, box; goggle-box  
 illicit weekend, dirty week-end  
 immediate occupancy, vacant possession  
 impassive, po-faced  
 impose, lay  
 impracticable, not on  
 improvement assessment, betterment levy  
 improvisation, lash-up  
 in a fix, up the pole; up the spout  
 in a foster home, in care  
 in a mess, all over the shop  
 in a pickle, in a cleft stick  
 in a spot, in a baulk/balk  
 in a tight spot, on a piece of string;  
     snookered  
 in a tizzy, in a fuzz  
 in between, between whiles  
 in box, in tray  
 incinerator, destructor  
 incoherent, skumble-scumble  
 inconsiderate, rude  
 incumbent, sitting  
 incur, attract  
 in danger, at risk  
 independent contracting, (the) lump  
 in desperate straits, past praying for  
 index card, record card  
 Indian, Red Indian  
 Indian summer, Luke's Little Summer;  
     St. Luke's summer; St. Martin's  
     summer  
 in distress, under the harrow  
 in dutch with (someone), in (someone's)  
     bad books  
 infatuate, besot  
 info, griff  
 in for it, for it  
 information, enquiries  
 in good shape, landed  
 in great shape, on form; up to the knocker  
 ingrown, ingrowing  
 in heat, on heat  
 inheritance tax, death duties  
 in hot water, in low water  
 initial, sign off  
 initiation fee, entrance fee  
 inlet, creek  
 inn, hostelry  
 innards, gubbins  
 inner-spring, interior-sprung  
 inning, innings  
 innkeeper, landlord  
 in raptures, over the moon  
 insect, creepy-crawly  
 inside dope, gen; griff  
 inside of loaf, crumb  
 in spades!, with knobs on!  
 inspect, view

installment plan, hire-purchase; tally plan;  
 (the) never-never  
 instant replay, action replay  
 instruct an expert, teach someone's  
   grandmother to suck eggs  
 instructions to trial lawyer, brief  
 instructor, lecturer  
 insufficient funds, no effects; R.D.;  
   refer to drawer  
 insulating layer, damp course  
 insurance, assurance  
 intensive search, comb-out  
 inter-city bus, coach; motor coach  
 intermission, interval  
 intern, houseman  
 internal, inland  
 international match, Test Match  
 interpolate, spatchcock  
 intersection, crossroads  
 intersection area, box  
 in the cards, on the cards  
 in the clutch, at the crunch  
 in the driver's seat, in the driving seat  
 in the highest rank, at the top of the tree  
 in the running, in the hunt  
 in the same situation, in the same case  
 in the soup, in the car  
 in the works, on the stocks  
 in town for the big occasion, up for  
   the Cup  
 in two shakes of a lamb's tail, in two  
   shakes of a duck's tail  
 investigation, enquiry  
 investment bank, merchant bank  
 invisible onlooker, fly on the wall  
 involve, attract  
 in wild disorder, all over the shop  
 I.R.S., the Revenue  
 Is someone helping you?, Have you been  
   served?  
 itinerant mender, tinker  
 It's all the same to me, I'm easy (about it)  
 it's unshakable, there's no shifting it  
 It's up to you, (The) ball's in your court

## J

jabber away, rabbit  
 jack, knave  
 jacket, spencer  
 jack-in-the-pulpit, cuckoo pint; lords and  
   ladies  
 jack (playing card), court-card  
 jack up, gazump  
 jail, boob; bridewell; shop  
 jailbird, lag  
 jalopy, banger; granny wagon  
 Jane Austen fan, Janeite  
 jelly roll, Swiss roll

jerk, clot; git; hoick; jobbernowl; nit; poon;  
   swab; twit  
 jimmy, jemmy  
 job, job of work; lark; ploy  
 jock, hearty  
 Joe Doakes, Joe Bloggs  
 john (toilet), loo; petty; bog  
 join up, club together  
 joke parody, cod  
 jug, boob  
 jug, jankers  
 juggle, cook; fluff  
 jumping the gun, early days  
 jump rope, skipping-rope  
 jump seat, slip seat  
 jump the gun, rush one's fences  
 jumpy, nervy; windy  
 June bug, cockchafer  
 junior varsity player, colt  
 junk, clutter; lumber  
 junket, swan  
 junkman, rag-and-bone man  
 junky, twopenny-halfpenny  
 jurisdictional dispute, demarcation dispute  
 just about, as near as dammit; as near as  
   makes no odds; just going  
 just a drop, titchy bit  
 just a minute!, hold on!  
 justice of the peace, magistrate  
 just what the doctor ordered, meat and  
   drink

## K

keep, detain  
 keep an eye one, keep obbo on  
 keep still!, be quiet!  
 keep your eyes peeled, keep your eyes  
   skinned  
 kerosene, paraffin  
 kicked the bucket, gone for a burton  
 kick hard, put the boot in  
 kickoff, K.O.  
 kick the bucket, drop off the hooks; peg  
   out; turn up one's toes  
 kid, kipper; nipper; rally; rot  
 kid (someone), have (someone)  
 kill time, stooge about  
 kindling, firewood  
 kind of, sort of thing  
 kind of thing, game  
 king (playing card), court-card  
 kitchen sink, sink  
 knee-high to a grasshopper, two pisspots  
   high  
 knight (hereditary), baronet  
 knit fabric (elastic), stockinet  
 knitted wrist cuff, muffetee  
 knock, pink

knocked up, in pod; preppers  
 knock holes in, drive a coach and horses through  
 knock-knee, bakers' knee  
 knock oneself out, graft; knock oneself up  
 knock oneself out at, put one's back into  
 knockout, raver  
 K.O. blow, oner

## L

laboratory assistant, demonstrator  
 labor union, trade union  
 lab test, practical  
 lack, want  
 lacking sense, gormless  
 ladybug, ladybird  
 ladyfinger, sponge finger  
 lady in waiting, maid of honour  
 lady's flat compact, flapjack  
 lady's suit, costume  
 lake, loch/lough; mear; mere; water  
 lame, gammy  
 landscaped ground, policy  
 landslide, landslip  
 lane, stream; track  
 large boot, beetle-crusher  
 large building, block  
 large fern, bracken  
 large order, shipping order  
 large public room, hall  
 large sherry (port) glass, schooner  
 large tent, marquee  
 large truck, juggernaut  
 lash, taws  
 last for the rest of (someone's) life, see (someone) out  
 laundry boiler, copper  
 law apprentice, devil  
 lawn bowling, bowls  
 lawyer, solicitor  
 lawyer's outside quarters, surgery  
 lawyer's session with clients, surgery  
 lay, grind; stuff  
 lay into, set about  
 lay it on thick, come it strong; draw the long bow  
 lazy susan, dumb-waiter  
 lead balloon, damp squib  
 lean bacon, griskin  
 lease, contract hire  
 leather dressing, dubbin  
 leatherneck, jolly  
 leave (a message), pass  
 leave (as an estate), cut up for  
 leave well enough alone, leave well alone  
 left-handed, left-arm  
 leftist, lefty  
 legal fiction, legal figment

legal holiday, bank holiday  
 legislative calendar, order paper  
 legislative report, blue book  
 lending library, subscription library  
 lens, glass  
 let off, set down  
 let (someone) have it, have (someone's) guts for garters  
 letter, blue  
 letter man, blue  
 letter opener, paper knife  
 letter z, zed  
 leverage, gearing  
 liability insurance, third party insurance  
 libretto, book of words  
 license plate, number plate  
 license to sell bottled alcoholic beverages, off licence  
 lickety-split, split-arse  
 lick (vanquish), flog  
 lie, fluff  
 lie low, go to ground; lie doggo  
 lieutenant colonel, wing commander  
 life insurance, assurance  
 life jacket, life vest  
 life preserver, life-belt  
 lifesaving service, humane society  
 lift, elevator  
 light supper, high tea; knife-and-fork tea  
 light waterproof jacket, anorak  
 like, find; sort of thing  
 like a house afire, like old boots  
 limit by cloture, guillotine  
 limits, boundary  
 line, free line; queue  
 linear suburban expansion, ribbon development  
 linen, dowlas  
 line of schoolchildren, crocodile  
 line squall, thundery trough  
 line up, queue  
 link arms with, link  
 linked with..., twin with...  
 linoleum, lino  
 lint, fleck; fluff  
 lip balm, lip salve  
 liquidation sale, closing-down sale  
**liquid measure** 384  
 liquor (hard), spirits  
 liquor store, wine merchant's  
 literary hack, devil  
 little devil, limb  
 little hill, molehill  
 little old lady from Dubuque, Aunt Edna  
 live, stay  
 live a sheltered life, live in cotton wool  
 live like a pig, pig it  
 liverwurst, liver sausage  
 livestock farmer, stockholder

live to a ripe old age, make old bones  
 living room, drawing-room; lounge;  
   sitting-room  
 loaded, swacked  
 load on, skinful  
 loafer, corner-boy; layabout  
 loafers, slip-on shoes  
 loathe, bar  
 local, branch; slow train  
 local tax, rate  
 local train, stopping train  
 locate, site  
 location of the john, geography of the  
   house  
 lock-up, glasshouse  
 locomotive fireman, stoker  
 lodge, slate club  
 London Police, (the) Met(s)  
**London slang** 391  
 long-distance call, trunk call  
 long-distance information, trunk enquiries  
 long run, good innings  
 longshoreman, docker  
 long term, long-stay  
 look, look round  
 look as if..., look like...  
 lookout point, viewpoint  
 look-see, shuffy  
 loony, dotty; loopy  
 loophole, let-out  
 loose gravel, loose chippings  
 loose-leaf binder, file  
 loose-leaf notebook, ring book  
 loose woman, scrubber; tart  
 Lord, lud  
 lordy!, lawk(s)!  
 lose one's balance, overbalance  
 lose out, kick the beam  
 lost, landed  
 lost and found, baggage service;  
   lost property office  
 lotsa luck!, (the) best of British luck!  
 loud, staring  
 louder!, speak up!  
 louse, nasty piece (bit) of work  
 lousy!, bad show!  
 lousy, bloody; filthy  
 lousy beer, swipes  
 lout, yobbo  
 love child, come-by-chance  
 lower class, down-market  
 low gear, bottom gear  
 lug, hump  
 luggage rack, roof-rack  
 lumber, deals; timber  
 lump, knob  
 lunch, tiffin  
 lunch coupon, luncheon voucher

## M

machine operator, machinist  
 machinery, works  
 made obvious, writ large  
 made to order, bespoke  
 made vicar, appointed to a cure of souls  
 made work, hospital job  
 maggot, gentle  
 magician, conjurer (conjuror)  
 magistrate, beak  
 magna, second  
 magnifying glass, reading glass  
 maid of all work, general servant  
 mail, post  
 mailbox, letter-box; pillar-box; post-box  
 mail car, postal van  
 mailing and handling, dispatch  
 mailman, postman  
 mail order buying, postal shopping  
 main road, arterial road  
 Main Street, High Street  
 maintenance man (road), lengthman  
   (lengthsman)  
 major in, read  
 major league, first class  
 make a booboo, drop a brick  
 make a case for, make out a case for  
 make a decision, take a decision  
 make a fourth, make a four up  
 make a fuss (row), cut up rough  
 make a gaffe, drop a clanger  
 make a killing, scoop the pool  
 make a long story short, cut a long story  
   short  
 make a play for, made a dead set at  
 make a touch, sub  
 make fun of, make game of  
 make it, have it off  
 makes one want more, moreish  
 make sure, ensure  
 make tea, brew up  
 make the rounds (of pubs), pub-crawl  
 mama, mummy/mum  
 -man, wallah  
 mantelpiece, mantelshelf  
 Manx cat, rumpy  
 map reference system, grid  
 margarine, marg(e)  
 the market, Throgmorton Street  
 marriage certificate, marriage lines  
 marriage clerk's office, Register Office  
 mashed potatoes, creamed potatoes; mash  
 mass-media public, admass  
 master-at-arms, jaunty  
 master of ceremonies, compère  
 masturbate, toss off  
 mat, mount  
 materials appraiser, quantity surveyor

math, maths  
 mathematics honor graduate, wrangler  
**measure, dry** 383  
**measure, liquid** 384  
 meat-pie, pie  
 mechanic, fitter  
 mechanical pencil, propelling pencil  
 medals, gongs  
 melee, scrum  
 member of college governing body, Fellow  
 member of the royal family, royal  
 menstruate, come on  
 Men Working, Road works  
 merry-go-round, roundabout  
 mess, balls; cock-up; muck  
 mess around, fossick; frig about  
 mess/mess up, mull; make a balls of  
 metal grate, fire-pan  
 methyl alcohol, white spirit  
 Mid-Lent Sunday, Mothering Sunday  
 midshipman, snotty  
 mid-years, collections  
 might, thundering  
 mighty (very), jolly  
 mild and bitter mixed, half-and-half  
 military officer's servant, batman  
 military policeman, redcap  
 milk truck, milk float  
 milled durum wheat, semolina  
 mimic accurately, hit off  
 mince pie, mincemeat tart  
 mind you, mind  
 mind your!, wait for it!  
 mine bucket, kibble  
 miniature railway, scenic railway  
 Mini Minor, mini  
 minnow, tiddler  
 minor, secondary subject  
 mint candy, humbug  
 misprint, literal error  
 miss, hunt  
 miss, miss out on  
 miss the point, get hold of the wrong end  
     of the stick  
 mister, governor  
 mixture, monium gatherum  
 mix-up, box-up; shemozzle  
 model home, show-house  
 moderator, linkman  
 molasses, treacle  
 molest, interfere with  
 Molotov cocktail, petrol bomb  
 mommy, mummy/mum  
 money (dough), lolly  
 money expressions differences 379, 382  
 moneymaking, money-spinning  
 money market, Lombard Street  
 money pouch, purse  
 money raising, money-spinning

money transfer order, banker's order  
 mongrel, Heinz hound; pye-dog  
 monitor, prefect  
 more dead than alive, dead-alive  
 more power to you, more power to your  
     elbow  
 morning coffee break, elevenses  
 mortar-board, square  
 most valuable player, man of the match  
 mother, mater  
 motorcycle, motor-bike  
 motorman, driver  
 mountainside hollow, corrie  
 mountain slope, scree  
 mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, kiss of life  
 move, move house  
 movie, film  
 movie business, Wardour Street  
 movies, flicks; pictures  
 moving, removals  
 moving van, pantechicon  
 Mr., Esq.  
 much attracted, keen on  
 mucilage, gum  
 muddle (*n.*), cock-up; nonsense  
 muddle (*v.*), besot  
 muddy bottom, putty  
 muffin stand, curate's assistant  
 multicolored sprinkles, hundreds and  
     thousands  
 multiple plug, adapter  
 municipal housing unit, council house  
 municipality, corporation  
 Murphy's Law, Sod's Law  
 mushy, soppy  
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 muslin, dowlas  
 mutual fund, unit trust  
 mutual insurance group, friendly society

## N

nab, noble  
 nag, screw  
 nailed down, nailed on; taped  
 nail polish, nail varnish; varnish  
**names**  
     botanical and zoological 393  
     family 376  
     place 376–377, 396–398  
 napkin, serviette  
 national passenger train timetable,  
     Bradshaw  
 native, local  
 navy yard, dockyard  
 nay-voter, non-content  
 near, nr.  
 neat, tidy  
 neck, snog

neck of the woods, turf  
 need, want  
 neighborhood bar, local  
 nerve, neck  
 net lease, repairing lease  
 newscaster, presenter  
 newsdealer, newsagent  
 newspaper editorial, leader  
 newsreader, newscaster  
 newsstand, bookstall; kiosk  
 nice going!, well bowled!; well done!  
 nice to hear your voice, nice to hear you  
 nice work!, good show!  
 nick, middle name  
 night on the town, night on the tiles  
 nightstick, baton  
 nine of diamonds, curse of Scotland  
 nip, drain  
 nipple, teat  
 no?, what?  
 no answer, no reply  
 no damned good, N.B.G.  
 no dice, in the basket  
 no fuss or feathers, nothing starchy  
 no great catch, not much cop  
 no holds barred, all in  
 no luck, no joy  
 nominate, adopt  
 non-Anglican, nonconformist  
 nonsense, rot  
 nonsense!, rubbish!  
 non-white, coloured; immigrant  
 noodle (head), bounce; conk; napper; noddle  
 No problem!, Not to worry!  
 nore, bind  
 north, norland  
 nose out, pip; pip at the post  
 no soap, in the basket  
 not a goddamned thing, sweet eff-all  
 not all there, (a) bit missing; simple  
 not applicable, N/A  
 notary public, Commissioner for Oaths  
 not at all, not half  
 not care a rap about, have no mind to  
 not deal with, leave alone  
 notebook, exercise book; jotter  
 not funny, past a joke  
 nothing, nil  
 nothing at all, damn all; sweet Fanny  
     Addams  
 nothing to write home about, nothing to  
     make a song about  
 no through trucks, except for access  
 notion, clue  
 notions, fancy goods  
 notions store, haberdashery  
 not nearly, not half  
 not so bad, not so dusty  
 not think much of, have no time for

not to mention, let alone  
 not too happy, not best blessed  
 no way!, not on your nelly  
 nudist, naturist  
 number, bit of goods  
**numbers** 386-388  
 nurse, sister  
 nut, nut-case; nutter  
 nut (head), crumpet  
 nuts, bonkers; crackers; doolally; stark  
     ravers  
 nuts about, struck on  
 nutty, potty

## O

oaf, muff; swab  
 oarlock, rowlock  
 oatmeal (cooked), porridge  
 oatmeal (uncooked), oats  
 observation deck, spectators' terrace  
 obstacle, facer  
 occasional, odd  
 occupant, occupier  
 odd, kinky  
 oddball, queer card  
 odds and ends, oddments  
 off color, near the knuckle  
 offer, do  
 office, reception  
 office of school principal/dean, headship  
 officer, official  
 Officer Commanding, O.C.  
 officer risen from the ranks, ranker  
 official business, statutory business  
 off limits, out of bounds  
 off one's rocker, off one's chump/off one's  
     dot/off one's onion  
 off the rack, off-the-peg  
 off the record, on a lobby basis  
 off to a good start, well away  
 oil and gasoline mixture, two-stroke  
 oilcloth, American cloth  
 oily, smarmy  
 O.K., landed; right  
 old duffer, gaffer  
 old hand, old soldier  
 old man, old cock  
 old people's home, almshouse  
 old retreat, dug-out  
 old soldier, old sweat  
 old-timer, old party  
 on a grand scale, writ large  
 on approval, on appro  
 on a silver platter, on a plate  
 on a spree, on the loose  
 once in a while, once in a way  
 one-horse town, one-eyed village  
 100, ton

150% percent overtime pay,  
 time and a half  
 100 honors, four honours  
 one-lane, single-track  
 one of a kind, one-off  
 one room apartment, bed-sitter  
 one-room cottage, bothy  
 one's business/occupation, line of country  
 one-way ticket, single  
 on one's own, off one's own bat;  
     on one's pat; on one's tod  
 on sale, on offer  
 on tenterhooks, on thorns  
 on the cuff, on the slate; on tick  
 on the double, smartish  
 on the loose, going spare  
 on the nose, dead on; spot-on  
 on the payroll, on the strength  
 on the reverse side, overleaf  
 on the right track, on the right lines  
 on the wagon, on the hob; on the teapot  
 on top of the world, cock-a-hoop  
 oomph, comeback  
 open house, monium gatherum  
 open one's mouth, say boo to a goose  
 open-toed shoes, peep-toes  
 open watercourse, leat  
 operating room, operating-theatre; theatre  
 operations, works  
 operations planning room, ops room  
 oppose, take against  
 oral examination, viva  
 orchestra, stalls  
 orchestra seat, stall  
 order, totem  
 Orient, East  
 or near offer, o.n.o.  
 out, get-out  
 outdo oneself, push the boat out  
 outdoor painting, external painting  
 outfit, kit  
 outlook, look-out  
 out of bed, up  
 out of luck, landed  
 outside, outwith  
 outstanding person/thing, oner  
 over, on; P.T.O.  
 overpass, fly-over  
 overripe, sleepy  
 overseas shipping, export carriage  
 overseer, supremo  
 overstock, backlog  
 overthrow, make hay of  
 oyster wrapped in bacon, angel on  
     horseback

## P

P.A. system, Tannoy

pack, look out  
 pack, shopping-bag  
 package, packet  
 package store, off licence  
 packed full of, packed out with  
 a pack of, twenty  
 pack up and go, up-stick  
 paid hospital bed, pay bed  
 pain, blighter  
 pain in the ass, Gawdelpus  
 paint, decorate  
 painting of the Last Judgment, doom  
 Pakistani, Paki  
 pal, cully  
 pan, send up rotten; slate  
 panties, knickers  
 pantry, larder  
 pantyhose, tights  
 paper napkin, square  
 par, level par  
 paraffin, white wax  
 pari-mutuel betting, tote betting  
 parking space, parking bay  
 parlor, saloon  
 parlor car, saloon-car  
 parochial school, denominational school  
 parole, ticket-of-leave  
 part, parting  
 partial school promotion, remove  
 part time, short time  
 party line, shared line  
 party not in power, (Her Majesty's) Loyal  
     Opposition  
 pass, overtake  
 passage, passing  
 passing grade, pass  
 passing lane, off-side lane  
 passing the hat, whip-round  
 pass out, flake out  
 pass out cold, spark out  
 pass (something) up, give (someone or  
     something) a miss  
 past the crisis, off the boil  
 patrol cars, mobile police  
 patrolled, under observation  
 patrolman, constable  
 paved road, metalled road  
 pavement, roadway  
 paving block, set  
 pay a fortune, pay the earth  
 pay as you go, P.A.Y.E.  
 payroll holdup, wage-snatch  
 pay (someone) peanuts, pay (someone) in  
     washers  
 pay spot cash, pay on the nail  
 pay up, stump up  
 peanut, ground-nut  
 peanut gallery, gods  
 peanut heaven, gods

- pear cider, perry  
 peculiar, odd  
 peddler of faked merchandise, duffer  
 pedestrian crossing, pelican crossing; zebra  
 pee, pumpship  
 penalty for delayed delivery,  
     backwardation  
 pension benefits, pension cover  
 pension plan, superannuation scheme  
 Pentecostal, Whit  
 pep, bean  
 pepper shaker, pepper-castor;  
     pepper-castor, pepper-pot  
 pep talk, ginger-up  
 perfectly, safe, as safe as a bank  
 performance records (teams'), league table  
 perfume, scent  
 period, full stop  
 periodical room, news-room  
 periwinkle, wrinkle  
 personal, private  
 personal baggage, dunnage  
 personal exemption, personal allowance  
 personnel, staff  
 person registered at a hotel, resident  
 person-to-person call, personal call  
 pest, blighter  
 pester, play (someone) up  
 petty, fiddling; mean  
 petty cash fund, float  
 pheasant, Norfolk sparrow  
 phone call, tinkle  
 phonograph, gramophone  
 piano (upright), stand-up piano  
 pick up, beat up; fit-up  
 picky, dainty; faddy  
 picture window, look-out window  
 pie, tart  
 piece of ass, bit of fluff  
 piece of rudeness, rudery  
 pie crust, pie shell  
 pie in the sky, jam tomorrow  
 pig food, pannage  
 pigheaded, bloody-minded  
 pig's cheek, bath chap  
 piles of..., bags of...  
 pimp, ponce  
 pimple, spot  
 pinch, lag; nick  
 ping, pink  
 pins and needles, (the) needle  
 pint of milk, pinta  
 piped music, wallpaper music  
 pitcher, jug  
 place (rooms), digs  
 plaguing, poxing  
 plain as the nose on your face, plain as a  
     pikestaff  
 plan, scheme  
 plank, item  
 plant (a rumor), put about  
 planted grove, plantation  
 platform, programme  
 platter, dish  
 played down, hole-in-the-corner  
 play fair, keep a straight bat;  
     play a straight bat  
 play hookey, wag it  
 play hooky, play truant  
 play safe, play for safety  
 play up on (someone), play (someone) up  
 Please..., I shall be glad if you will...  
 plexiglass, Perspex  
 plug along, peg away  
 plumber, fitter  
 plumbing, drains  
 plump, pudsy  
 plum pudding, plum duff  
 plurality, majority  
 pocket notebook, pocketbook  
 point system, totting-up procedure  
 poison, hemlock  
 poke fun at, quiz  
 poker session, poker school  
**poker slang** 392  
 pokey, quod  
 pole, stick  
 police beat, patch  
 police car, jam sandwich; panda car; Z-car  
 Police Constable, P.C.  
 police lineup, identification parade  
 policeman, constable  
 police wagon, prison van  
 polish (someone), see (someone) off  
 political journalist, lobbyist  
 political platform, party manifesto  
 political scientist, politician  
 Pollyanna, Mark Tapley  
 pond, water  
 pony, crib  
 pool, club together; lasher; pond  
 poolroom, billiard-saloon  
 pooped, jiggered  
 poorhouse, workhouse  
 pope's nose, parson's nose  
 pop fly, lofty catch; sky ball  
 pop over, nip round  
 pork and beans, beans and bacon  
 port commission, conservancy  
 porterhouse, sirloin  
 poser, tickler  
 post, stick  
 postcard, P.C.  
 postpaid, post-free  
 postpone, stand down  
 postponed, stood out  
 potato chips, crisps  
 pot-holder, kettle-holder; oven glove

pottie, po  
 potty, jerry; pot  
 poultry dealer, poulterer  
 pound, nicker  
 pound notes, ...of the best  
 pour, pour with rain  
 pour (the tea), be mum  
 powdered sugar, icing sugar  
 practical nurse, S.E.N.  
 preferred stock, preference shares  
 pregnancy, pudding club  
 premium, four-star  
 prepayment penalty, redemption fee  
 pre-preparatory school, prep school  
 present (gift), prezzy  
 president, vice-chancellor  
 press, Fleet Street  
 pressed for, pushed for  
 press publication restriction, D-notice  
 pretty, dinky  
 prick, hampton  
 prime rate, base rate  
 prime time, peak viewing time  
 Prince Albert, frock-coat  
 principal, head  
 printing, impression  
 printing company's annual picnic,  
     wayzgoose  
 prison guard, warder  
 private hospital, nursing home  
 private line, exclusive line  
 private school, public school  
 Privy Councillor, P.C.  
 prix fixe, set lunch  
 proctor at school examination, invigilator  
 prod, job  
 producer, manager; producer  
 promptly, like one o'clock  
 pronto, bang off  
**pronunciation** 376–378  
 proofreader, corrector  
 prostitute (be a), be on the game;  
     be on the knock  
 provide, lay on  
 proving-ground, test bed  
 prune wrapped in bacon, devil on  
     horseback  
 pruning shears, secateurs  
 pry open, prize  
 pub, pot-house  
 pubkeeper, landlord  
 public address system, Tannoy  
 public housing unit, council house  
 public issue, offer for subscription  
 public office holder, placeman  
 public school, council school; state school  
 pull (bring) it off, have it off  
 pullover, jersey; jumper  
 pull rank on, pip

pull (someone's) leg, rally  
 pull up stakes, pull up sticks; up stumps  
 pump, court shoe  
 punching bag, punch-bag  
 punch in the nose, snorter  
**punctuation and style differences**  
     380–381  
 punishment task, impost  
 puppet, poodle  
 pursue, tail after  
 push, flog  
 pushcart, barrow; trolley  
 push-up, press-up  
 put in place, offer-up  
 put it over on (someone), sell (someone) a  
     dummy  
 put (oneself) out to, lay (oneself) out to  
 put on the dog, put on side  
 put out, run out  
 put out (be a nuisance), put about  
 put (someone) out, dismiss  
 put together roughly, cobble  
 put to sleep, put down  
 put up, field; set fair  
 put up (for the night), shake down  
 puzzle, stick up

## Q

quality, county  
 quarter note, crotchet  
 quarter of a pond, quarter  
 queasy, queer  
 queen (playing card), court-card  
 quick and lively, like one o'clock  
 quick as a wink, quick as thought  
 quick job, lick and a promise  
 quick tour, whip-round  
 quiet down, go off the boil; quieten  
 quilt, eiderdown  
 quit, pack up  
 quite a..., fair old...  
 quite a dish, nice bit of work  
 quite sure, morally certain  
 quotation marks, inverted commas

## R

rabbit, rebate  
 racetrack, race-course  
 racist, racialist  
 racket, dodge; ramp  
 radio, wireless  
 radio-phonograph, radiogram  
 rage, wax  
 railroad switch, point  
 rails, metals  
 rain cats and dogs, rain stair-rods  
 raincoat, mac

- raise, keep; put up; rise  
 raise an issue, start a hare  
 raisin, sultana  
 rambling, skimble-scamble  
 rambunctious, rumbustious  
 rancor, gall  
 rat cheese, mousetrap cheese  
 rather, -ish  
 rat on, nobble  
 rats!, blast!; bother  
 rattled, in a flat spin  
 ravine, gill  
 raving, staring  
 raw, underdone  
 ready-made, reach-me-down  
 ready to go, ready for off  
 ready-to-wear, off-the-peg  
 real, proper; right  
 real estate, property  
 real estate broker, estate agent; land agent  
 real-estate developer, developer  
 real estate development, estate  
 rear of orchestra, pit  
 receive (stolen goods), reset  
 recess, break; playtime; inty  
 record on license, endorse  
 red as a beet, red as a turkey-cock  
 red flag, red rag  
 red herring, Norfolk capon  
 red light-green light, Tom Tiddler's ground  
 refer, pass  
 reference, referee  
 reforest, reafforest  
 reformatory, borstal; remand home  
 Reform Jew, Liberal Jew  
 reform school, approved school  
 refrigerator, fridge  
 refuse container, skip  
 register, visitors' book  
 registered at a hotel, resident  
 registered identification mark, monomark  
 registered nurse, hospital nurse  
 regular, ordinary; proper  
 relax, put one's feet up  
 religious organization, fraternity  
 remainder (interest), reversionary interest  
 remnant, off cut  
 remote sewage disposal pipe, long sea  
   outfall  
 removable bridge, denture  
 rent-a-car, hire-and-drive  
 rent controlled, rent-protected  
 rent (horse and carriage), job  
 reorganization plan, scheme of  
   arrangement  
 repair, mend  
 require, want  
 required reading, set book  
 requisition, indent  
 research scientist, boffin  
 reservation, reserve  
 reserve, book  
 reside, stay  
 residence farm, home-farm  
 resident doctor, registrar  
 residential development, housing estate  
 resident student, boarder  
 residuary estate, residual estate  
 restless soul, fart in a colander;  
   tit in a trance  
 rest room, convenience  
 retailer, stockist  
 retain, instruct  
 retarded, M.D.  
 retire, stand down  
 retiree, O.A.P.  
 retirement present, leaving gift  
 retread, remould  
 retroactive, retrospective  
 return mail, return post  
 reveal one's character/party, show one's  
   colours  
 review, crit; notice; revision  
 revile, slang  
 revoke license, strike off  
**rhyming slang** 391  
 rickety vehicle, shandrydan  
 ridicule, guy  
 rid of, shot of  
 right, just; slap  
 right!, that's it!  
 right here, just here  
 right on the nose, bang on  
 right with you!, just a tick!  
 ring, bell  
 ring, tinkle  
 rise and shine, show a leg  
 river, water  
 river bend, gut  
 river commission, conservancy  
 roadbed, permanent way  
 road hog, crown stroller  
 road maintenance man, lengthman  
   (lengthsman)  
 roadster, two-seater  
 Road Under Repair, Road Up  
 road without speed limit, de-restricted road  
 roast, joint  
 roast, rude  
 roller coaster, big dipper; switchback  
 rookie, colt; erk  
 room in a rooming-house, kip  
 rooming-house, kip  
 root for, barrack  
 roster, rota  
 rotten, mankie  
 rough time, bad patch  
 roundhouse, running shed

round-neck, turtle-neck  
 round-trip ticket, return  
 round up, organize  
 route, round  
 row, hoo-ha; shemozzle; bother  
 row of joined houses, terrace  
 Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, R.A.D.A.  
 Royal Air Force, R.A.F.  
 Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, Wavy Navy  
 Royal Navy, Senior Service  
 rubber, conker  
 rubber boots, gumboots; Welliboots;  
 Wellingtons  
 rubber check, dud cheque  
 rubbers, galoshes  
 rubbing alcohol, surgical spirit  
 rubbish heap, laystall  
 rubbish receptacle, skivvy-bin  
 rubble, spoil  
 Rube Goldberg, Heath Robinson  
 rub the wrong way, rub up the wrong way  
 ruckus, do  
 rugby scrum, ruck  
 rumble seat, dickey  
 rummage sale, jumble sale  
 run, ladder; stand  
 run along, cut along  
 run for office, put up  
 run into a streak of bad luck, shoot a robin  
 run rings around (someone), hit (someone)  
 all over the shop  
 the runs, squitters  
 run through (money), make off with  
 run to ground, earth  
 run up, cobble

## S

saddle, off-load  
 saddled with, lumbered with  
 saddle (someone) with, land (someone)  
 with  
 safe cracker, peterman  
 safekeeping, safe storage  
 sailors' clothes/bedding, slops  
 saleslady, assistant  
 salesman, assistant  
 salesperson, counter-jumper  
 sales tax, V.A.T.  
 sally forth, eddy forth  
 saloon keeper, publican  
 salt beef, corned beef  
 salt marsh, salting  
 same old story, mixture as before  
 sandbox, play-pit  
 sandpaper, glasspaper  
 sandwich, round  
 sandwich box, snap-tin  
 sandy stretch by the sea, dene

Santa Claus, Father Christmas  
 sausage, banger; slinger  
 sausage in batter, toad-in-the-hole  
 save one's skin, save one's bacon  
 savings account, deposit account  
 savvy, nous  
 sawbuck, tenner  
 scab, blackleg; (strikebreaker), knob  
 scallion, spring onion  
 scalper, ticket tout  
 scavenger, mudlark  
 schedule, timetable  
 scheduled sporting event, fixture  
 schedule of charges, tariff  
 scheme, wheeze  
 schlepp, hump  
 schnozzle, hooter  
 scholarship, studentship  
 scholarship student, scholar  
 Scholastic Aptitude Tests, A-levels  
 school, college  
 schoolmaster, beak  
 school party, school treat  
 (school) recess, inty  
 School Zone, Patrol  
 scold, threap  
 scorecard, matchcard  
 Scotch, whisky  
 Scotch tape, Sellotape  
 scounge, noble  
 scout race horses, tout  
 scam!, push off!  
 scam, scarper  
 scrap coal, dross  
 scraper, shave hook  
 scratch pad, scribbling-block  
 scrawny, scraggy  
 screw, diddle; roger  
 Screw that!, Stuff that for a game of soldiers!  
 scrimmage, scrum  
 scurry, scutter  
 scythe, swop  
 sea fog, sea fret  
 sea inlet, loch/lough  
 sea level, ordnance datum  
 sea mist, haar  
 seaside promenade, front  
 secondary issue, offer for sale  
 second balcony, upper circle  
 second floor, first floor  
 second rank, second eleven  
 secretary, P.A.  
 Secretary of Labor, Employment Secretary  
 sedan, saloon  
 See?, Follow?  
 Seeing Eye dog, guide dog  
 see one in hell, see (someone) far enough  
 see (someone's) point, take (someone's)  
 point

- see the last of, see the back of  
 see through, rumble  
 select, look out  
 select by chance, pitch upon  
 self-service, self-selection  
 sell illegally, flog  
 sell out, sell up  
 semiannual, half-yearly  
 semiannually, half-yearly  
 seminal fluid, spunk  
 seminary, theological college  
 send up, lag  
 send up a trial balloon, fly a kite  
 senior citizen, O.A.P.  
 senior citizen, pensioner; SOP  
 sensation, shock  
 sentenced to an indeterminate term,  
     detained during the Queen's (King's)  
     pleasure  
 serve in large quantities, dollop  
 serve time, do bird  
 service, approach  
 the service, (the) forces  
 service counter, servery  
 serving, sitting  
 serving dish, dish  
 set, lay  
 set of deadbeats, long firm  
 set the ball rolling, open the bowling  
 set the pace, take (make) up the running  
 set the world on fire, set the Thames on fire  
 settle a score, wipe off a score  
 settle down, hang up one's hat;  
     play oneself in  
 severe, shrewd  
 sewerage system, drains  
 sewing gear kit, housewife  
 sex session, bit of spare  
 sexually unconventional, kinky  
 sexy, fruity  
 shabby, scruffy; tatty  
 shake, judder  
 shaky, dicky  
 shallow, fleet  
 shape, nick  
 shape up, pull one's socks up  
 share, whack  
 shared meanings 4  
 shark, whale  
 sharp, downy; sharpen; shrewd  
 sharpie, twister; wide boy  
 sharp operator, spiv  
 shell out, unbelt  
 sheriff's assistant, bailiff  
 sherry (port) glass, schooner  
 shiftless, come-day-go-day  
 shine, black  
 shingle, brass plate  
 shingled with tiles, tile-hung  
 ship, forward  
 shipping and handling, postage (posting)  
     and packing  
 shipyard, dockyard  
 shirk, skulk  
 shirt, spencer  
 shock of grain, stook  
 shoe, boot  
 the shoe is on the other foot, (the) boot is  
     on the other leg (foot)  
 shoemaker, shoe mender  
 shooting area, shoot  
 shooting expedition, shoot  
 shooting party, shoot  
 shooting practice, shoot  
 short coat, coattee  
 short hairs, curlies  
 short rations, short commons  
 shorts (outerwear), shorts  
 short-timer, leaver  
 shot of booze, finger  
 shoulder, berm  
 show, house  
 shrewd, cute  
 shrewd cookie, long-head  
 shut up!, belt up!; put a bung in it!;  
     wrap up!  
 sick as a dog, sick as a cat  
 sick bay, sicker  
 sick note, aeger  
 sick to one's stomach, sick  
 sideboards, sideburns  
 side effect, knock-on effect  
 sidelines, touch-lines  
 sidewalk, footway; pavement  
 side with (someone), play for (someone's)  
     side  
 sight, guy  
 sight translation, unseen  
 sign, board  
 silent partner, sleeping partner  
 simpleton, looby; muggins  
 single room, apartment  
 sink, basin  
 sirloin, rump steak  
 sister-cited with..., twin with...  
 sit down, put one's arse to anchor  
 situation, position; wicket  
 situation room, incident room  
 sixteenth note, semiquaver  
 skilled mechanic, service engineer  
 skip, hunt  
 skipping town, moonlight flit  
 skip town, levant  
 skip town by night, shoot the moon  
 slacks, bags  
**slang** 2, 390–393  
 slash, oblique  
 sled, sledge

sleep, kip  
 sleeping sickness, sleepy sickness  
 sleep in the open, sleep rough  
 sleep late, lie in; sleep in  
 sleeveless sweater, slipover  
 slicker, loose waterproof  
 slip, guy  
 slipcovers, loose covers  
 slippery, greasy  
 slip up, put a foot wrong  
 sloppy clothes, slops  
 slot machine, fruit machine  
 slouch hat, trilby  
 slow lane, near-side lane  
 slow on the uptake, slow off the mark  
 slowpoke, slowcoach  
 sluggish, tardy  
 sly, pawky  
 smack, slosh  
 small carplike fish, roach  
 small eel, grig  
 small farmer, yeoman  
 small fruit basket, punnet  
 small landholding, croft  
 small rented garden area, allotment  
 small scythe, bagging-hook  
 small shrimp, prawn  
 small spongy cake, muffin  
 small-time, small beer  
 small town, village  
 small wood, copse  
 smashed, sloshed  
 smash hit, bomb  
 smock, overall  
 snap, popper; snapper  
 snapper, cracker  
 snappy, nippy  
 sneakers, gym shoes  
 sneakers, plimsolls  
 sneak off, slope off  
 snooze, zizz  
 snowed in, snowed up  
 soak, rush; sting  
 soapbox orator, tub-thumper  
 soccer, football  
 soccer, footer  
 soccer team, eleven  
 socialized medicine, National Health Service  
 sock on the jaw, fourpenny one  
 sod, turf  
 soda pop, squash  
 sofa, divan  
 soft bun, fat rascal  
 soft drink, mineral  
 soft soap, flannel  
 soldier in the ranks, ranker  
 Sold Out, House Full  
 solicit, importune

solitaire, patience  
 something special, bobby-dazzler  
 somewhat, -ish  
 sonar, Asdic  
 song-thrush, throistle  
 sonic boom, sonic bang  
 son of a gun, beggar  
 sophisticatedly off-beat, kinky  
 sop up, mop up  
 sore, narked  
 sort of, -ish  
 so there!, sucks to you!  
 soul kiss, tongue sandwich  
 sound, copper-bottomed  
 south end of a northbound horse, east end  
     of a westbound cow  
 spark plug, sparking-plug  
 sparrow, spadger  
 spatula, fish-slice; palette-knife  
 spay, doctor  
 speakeasy, shebeen  
 speak to, have a word with  
 special delivery, express  
 specialist (medical), consultant  
 specs, gig-lamps  
 speed bumps, rumble strip  
**spelling** 381  
 spending spree, mucker  
 spiced meatball, faggot  
 spicy, fruity  
 spill, mucker  
 spin, birl; twizzle  
 spit, gob  
 split even, fifty-fifty sale  
 split off, hive off  
 spoil, rot  
 spoil, wrap in cotton wool  
 spoiled, off  
 spoil one's record, blot one's copybook  
 spoilsport, wowser  
**spoken usage and figures of speech**  
 378–379  
 sponge bath, bed bath; blanket bath  
 sponge rubber, sorbo rubber  
 spoof, cod  
 spool, reel  
 sports, athletics  
 spree, razzle  
 spring cleaning, spring-clean  
 sprinkling wagon, water-cart  
 spud, tater/'tatur/tatie  
 spuds, praties  
 squabble, argue the toss; barney  
 squabblers, Kilkenny cats  
 squander, blue; make off with  
 squash, marrow  
 squeal (inform), grass  
 squeal on, round on; shop; split on  
 squeal on (someone), put (someone's) pot on

- squeeze-box, squiffer  
 squeeze out, wrinkle out  
 squelch, quench  
 squinty, boss-eyed  
 S-shaped couch, sociable  
 stagehand, scene-shift  
 stage left, prompt  
 stage mob noise, rhubarb  
 stage plays, legitimate drama  
 stage right, opposite prompt  
 staggered lights, linked signals  
 stake up, stick  
 stalks and leaves, shaw  
 stall, stonewall  
 stand, stall; stick  
 standby, twelfth man  
 stand for, sit down under; wear  
 standing room, terraces  
 stand in (someone's) way, stand in  
     (someone's) light  
 stand up, wash  
 stand up and be counted, show one's  
     colours  
 star, principal boy  
 stark naked, starkers  
 State Department, Foreign Office  
 state employment office, labour exchange  
 state fair, agricultural show  
 state of agitation, taking  
 state's evidence, King's (Queen's) evidence  
 station agent, station-manager  
 station house, nick  
 station-to-station call, ordinary call  
 station wagon, estate car  
 statutory tenant, sitting tenant  
 stay, stop  
 staying power, bottom  
 stay out of it, hold the ring  
 steaks and chops, grills  
 steal, snip  
 steal fruit, scrump  
 steeplechase rider, jump jockey  
 stem-winder, keyless watch  
 stenographer, shorthand typist  
 steno pad, jotter  
 step on, cram on  
 step on it, step out  
 stewardess, air hostess  
 sticker, label  
 stick-pin, breast-pin  
 stickpin, tie-pin  
 stick (someone), sell (someone) a pup  
 stick to one's guns, stick out  
 stick with it, soldier on  
 still in contention, through  
 stingray, fire-flair  
 stingy, mean  
 stink, pong  
 stinker, shocker  
 stockade, glasshouse  
 stock dividend, bonus issue (share);  
     free issue of new shares  
 stock exchange defaulter, lame duck  
 stocking cap, jelly-bag cap  
 stock market transaction, bargain  
 stocks, shares  
 stock touting, share-pushing  
 stomach, little Mary  
 stone facing, stone cladding  
 stone wall, brick wall; hedge  
 stoolie, snout  
 stool pigeon, nark  
 Stop, Halt  
 stop bugging me!, get knotted!  
 stop off at, break a journey at  
 stopover, staging post  
 stopper, guard  
 storage room, box-room; lumber-room  
 store, shop  
 stove, cooker  
 stow it!, put a sock in it!  
 straight, neat  
 straight ahead, straight on  
 straight drink, short  
 straight razor, cut-throat  
 straw hat, boater  
 straw mattress, palliasse  
 streamlined, swept-out  
 streetcar, tram  
 street cleaner, road-sweeper  
 street coffee stand, coffee-stall  
 street crossing light, Belisha beacon  
 street litterbox, orderly bin  
 street name, marking name  
 stretch, whack  
 string beans, French beans; runner beans  
 stringer, runner  
 striping, lining  
 strip mining, open-cast mining  
 strokes, ...of the best  
 stroller, push-chair  
 strong beer, stout  
 strung out, strung up  
 stub, counterfoil  
 stubborn, bloody-minded  
 stuck on, struck on  
 stuck-up, toffee-nosed  
 stuck (with), fobbed off (with)  
 Student Driver, L plate  
 study for the bar, eat one's terms  
 study hall, prep  
 stuff, stodge  
 stuffed, pogged  
 stuffiness (room), fug  
 stuffy, frowsty; starchy  
 stunt, rag  
 stupefy, besot  
 stylish smart, posh

stymie, queer the pitch  
 submit for discussion, table  
 subsidiary, daughter concern  
 suburb for nouveaux riches, stockbroker belt  
 subway, tube; underground  
 succeed, win  
 sucker, easy meat  
 sucking up, cupboard love  
 suckling pig, sucking pig  
 suffer no harm, take no harm  
 suite, set  
 suit (fit), fadge  
 summa, first  
 sunny, sheltered place, sun-trap  
 superfluous, gash  
 supposed to, meant to  
 sure!, right  
 surely, fair  
 sure thing, dead cert; snip  
 surgical dressing, lint  
 surplus, reserve  
 surplus population, overspill  
 suspenders, braces  
 swagger, panache  
 sweater, jersey; spencer  
 sweater, wooly  
 sweet butter, fresh butter  
 sweetie, poppet  
 swell (*adj.*), bang-up; swagger  
 swell (*n.*), nob; toff  
 swim, bathe  
 swimming pool, swimming-bath  
 swindle, do; fiddle; swizz; twist  
 swinging door, swing-door  
 swipe, bone; flog; pinch  
 switchblade, flick-knife  
 switchboard operator, telephonist  
 switchman, pointsman  
 switch tower, signal-box  
 switchyard, shunting yard  
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## T

table d'hôte, set lunch  
 taffy, toffee  
 tag, label; tig  
 Tag Day, Flag Day  
 take, screw; want  
 take a decisive step, put the boot in  
 take a dislike to, take a scunner at (against)  
 take (a letter), take down  
 take a look at, run the rules over  
 take an examination, sit an examination  
 take a pee, pumpship  
 take a powder, cut one's lucky  
 take a shot at, have a bash at  
 take a tumble, come a cropper  
 take care of, sort out

take (cheat), take down  
 take it easy!, wait for it!  
 take off, beetle off  
 take-off, cod; send-up  
 take (someone) in, do (someone) brown  
 take the best (people) out of, cream off  
 take the bull by the horns, grasp the nettle  
 take the cake, take the biscuit  
 take the lead, make the running;  
     take (make) up the running  
 take to one's bed, lie up  
 take turns, take it in turns to  
 talent scout, talent-spotter  
 talk a blue streak, talk the hind leg off a  
     donkey  
 talking to, jaw  
 talk nonsense, haver  
 talk nonsense on and on, blather (blather)  
 talk one's way out, flannel  
 talk through one's hat, talk through (out of)  
     the back of one's neck  
 tamp, pun  
 tamper with, nobble  
 tantrum, paddy  
 tape needle, bodkin  
 taps, last post  
 target, Aunt Sally  
 tartan trousers, trews  
 teacher, master / mistress  
 team, side  
 tea maker, kettle-boy  
 teams' performance records, league table  
 tear down, pull down  
 tear jerker, weepy / ie  
 tease, cod; rag  
 tedious, tiresome  
 teed off, brassed off  
 teetotal, TT  
 teetotaler, TT; wowser  
 telephone, blower  
 telephone booth, kiosk  
 telephone pole, telegraph pole  
 telephone repair department, faults and  
     services difficulties  
 TelePrompTer, autocue  
 television (TV), telly  
 tell off, tick off  
 temporary mailing address,  
     accommodation address  
 temporary pasture, ley  
 temporary school leave, exeat  
 temporary stock certificate, scrip  
 tenderloin, fillet; undercut  
 ten-foot pole, barge-pole  
 ten to one, guinea to a gooseberry  
 terminal, terminus  
 tern, scray  
 terribly (very), beastly  
 terrific, (a) treat; smashing; wizard

terrifically, not half; treacle  
 textile dealer, mercer  
 textiles, soft goods  
 thanks!, ta  
 that does it!, that's torn it!  
 that excuse (plea, plan) won't work, that  
     cock won't fight  
 that's a..., there's a...  
 that's incredible!, It isn't true!  
 that's the ticket!, that's the job!  
 there you are!, Bob's your uncle!  
 thermos bottle, dewar; vacuum flask  
 thick, dim; double  
 thicket, shaw; spinney  
 thick-headed, as dim as a Toc H lamp  
 thickheaded, dim  
 thimbleful, toothful  
 thin copy paper, flimsy  
 thin down, fine down  
 thing, touch  
 thingamajigs, gubbins  
 third-class mail, printed paper rates  
 third-degree squad, heavy gang  
 thirty-second note, demsemiquaver  
 thorny shrub, whin  
 thread, cotton  
 3 bushels, windle  
 through, till  
 throw caution to the winds, throw one's  
     bonnet over the windmill  
 throw in, throw up  
 throw out, turf out  
 throw together, knock up  
 throw up, be sick; sick up  
 thumb one's nose, cock a snook  
 thumbtack, drawing-pin  
 thumbtack, push-pin  
 thwart, queer the pitch  
 tick-tack-toe, noughts and crosses  
 tidal flood, eagre or eager  
 tidal stream, lough  
 tidbit, savoury  
 tidbits, titbits  
 tide-flat, salting  
 tight, elephant's; screwed; tossed  
 tight (stingy), mingy  
 time and charges, A.D.C.  
 time off, remission  
 tinker's dam, tinker's cuss  
 tip, dropsy  
 tip (on the races), nap  
 tipsy, cut; squiffy; tiddley; well away  
 title, freehold  
 tizzy, fret; tig; way  
 to a T, like one o'clock  
 to go, to take away  
 to have had it, (to) have had one's chips  
 to London, up  
 to piss, slash

to tell the truth, actually  
 toboggan, luge  
 toil, fag  
 toilet, W.C.  
 toilet articles, washing things  
 toilet bowl, closet; pedestal  
 toilet kit, sponge bag  
 toilet paper, lavatory paper  
 tollfree number, freefone  
 tone, note  
 tons of, masses of  
 too, as well  
 too good to pass up, too good to miss  
 took the bait, penny in the slot  
 toot, razzle  
 top, roof  
 top boy/girl, head boy/girl  
 topnotch talent, star turn  
 top of the bottle, head  
 top round, silverside; topside  
 top secret, most secret  
 top sergeant, sergeant-major  
 torrent, gill  
 toss one's cookies, shoot the cat  
 tot, kipper  
 total loss, poor tool  
 tote bag, Dorothy bag  
 touch and go, dicey  
 touchdown, try  
 tough, corner-boy; keelie; rough  
 tough break, bit of a knock  
 tough going, against the collar  
 toughie, street rough  
 tough luck!, bad show!; hard cheese!  
 tough on, hot on  
 tough situation, sticky wicket  
 tow car, recovery van  
 town, council; parish  
 tow truck, breakdown van (lorry)  
 toy, ploy  
 track, line  
 tracklayer, platelayer  
 track (someone) down, lay (someone) by  
     the heels  
 traffic circle, roundabout  
 traffic jam, hold-up; traffic block  
 traffic officer, traffic warden  
 traffic policeman, pointsman  
 traffic post, bollard  
 trailer truck, articulated lorry; bender  
 transfer temporarily, second  
 transient, non-resident; temporary guest  
 transit system, transportation system  
 transmission, gearbox  
 transom, fair-light  
 transportation, transport  
 trap, gob  
 trapezoid, trapezium  
 trash, tripe and onions

trash basket, litter bin  
 traveling salesman, bagman; commercial traveller  
 traveling show, mobile production  
 Treasury, the Revenue  
 Treasury Department, Exchequer  
 treat, jam; push the boat out; shout  
 treat (someone) right, do (someone) well  
 trellis, pergola  
 trial balloon, Aunt Sally  
 trial lawyer, barrister  
 tricky, dodgy  
 tricky job, tease  
 trifle, ha'p'orth  
 trimester, term  
 triple achievement, hat trick  
 trot, crib  
 trouble, bother; snag  
 troublesome, awkward  
 trouble spot, black spot  
 troubling, worrying  
 trouser cuff, turn-up  
 truck, bogie; lorry  
 truck drivers' all-night diner, transport caf  
 truck farm, market garden  
 trudge, foot-slog  
 trundle bed, trundle  
 trunk (of car), boot  
 try, go  
 try it out, try it on  
 T-shirt, gym vest  
 tube, valve  
 tubular fluorescent lighting, strip lighting  
 tucked out, cooked; creased; knackered  
 turn, go; turning  
 turn a blind eye to, turn the Nelson eye on  
 turned, gone  
 turned on, switched on  
 turning-around place, winding point  
 turnip (yellow), swede  
 turnkey deal, package deal  
 turn on, round on  
 turn one's back on, send to Coventry  
 turn over, tick over  
 turnpike, motorway  
 turn (someone) in, give (someone) out  
 turn up, knock on  
 turtleneck, polo neck  
 tuxedo, dinner-jacket  
 TV, telly  
 twaddle, waffle  
 25 pounds, pony  
 21 tons 4 cwt, keel  
 twist, screw  
 twisted, kinky

two-family, semi-detached  
 two weeks, fortnight  
 type of activity, lark  
 type of cloth, wincey  
 typesetter, compositor  
 type (sort), mark

## U

umbrella, gamp  
 unable to play, unfit  
 unconventional, bolshy (bolshie)  
 uncouple, hook off  
 under control, in hand  
 underhand, hole-and-corner  
 underpants, liners; pants  
 undershirt, vest  
 undertaker, funeral furnisher  
 under the doctor's care, under the doctor  
 under the weather, pulled down  
 undies, frillies; smalls  
 unemployed, redundant  
 unemployment benefits, (the) dole  
 unholy mess, dog's breakfast  
 uniformed doorman and the like, commissionaire  
 unilateral declaration of independence, U.D.I.  
 unilateral deed, deed-poll  
 union cost-of-living contract, threshold agreement  
 union protest activity, industrial action  
 union suit, combinations  
**units of measure** 383–385  
 figurative 379  
 unlisted, ex-directory  
 unmistakably, nothing (else) for it  
 unpleasant, beastly  
 unserviceable, U.S.  
 unskilled hunter, postman's knock man  
 unsurpassable, imperial  
 untidy, scruffy  
 unused land, waste land  
 uplands, downs  
 up one's alley, line of country  
 upper crust, upper ten  
 uppercut, undercut  
 uppity, uppish  
 upright piano, stand-up piano  
 uproar, hoo-ha; row-de-dow  
 upset, cut up; turn-up  
 upset price, reserve price  
 up the creek, jiggered; snookered;  
 up a gum tree; up the junction  
 up to snuff, quite  
 urinate, pee  
 urination, pee  
 use a bathroom, spend a penny  
 use of the bathroom, wash

USO, ENSA  
utterly, to the wide

## V

vacant lot, spare ground  
vacation, holiday; vac  
vacation time, hols  
vacuum, Hoover  
vacuum cleaner, Hoover  
valance, pelmet  
valet, man  
vamoose, hare off  
vaudeville, variety  
vaudeville act, turn  
vaudeville theater, music-hall  
velvet jacket, bridge coat  
vending machine, slot machine  
vermouth, martini  
very, ever so; frightfully; v.  
very attractive, dishy  
vest, waistcoat  
veteran, ex-service man  
veteran's bonus, gratuity  
Veterans' Day, Remembrance Sunday  
vexed, shirty  
vicar's assistant, curate  
vice, versa, arsy-versy  
viscera, offal  
visitation, access  
volleying, knock-out; knock-up  
voltage, pressure  
vote wholeheartedly, plump

## W

Wac, Waac  
wad, sheaf; wedge  
wade, paddle  
wage ceiling, pay code  
wage control, pay policy; wage restraint  
waiting room, reception-room  
wait on, serve  
waitress, nippy  
wake up by knocking, knock up  
walking papers, marching papers  
wall material, cob  
Wall Street, Lombard Street; Throgmorton  
Street  
wall-to-wall, fitted  
warden, governor  
warehouse, store  
washed, dhobied  
Washington (the government), Whitehall  
washout, shower  
wash sale, bed and breakfast  
waste, gash  
wastebasket, waste bin; waste-paper  
basket

wasteland, moor  
watch chain, albert  
watch-crystal, watch-glass  
watchdog, guard dog  
watch out for, mind  
watch pocket, fob pocket  
watch the clock, work to time  
watch with hinged covers, hunter  
watercourse (open), leat  
water heater, geyser  
Wave, Wren  
waxed paper, grease-proof paper  
way, road  
wearisome, tiresome  
wear out, knock up; wear off  
weather bureau, meteorological office  
weatherstripping, sausage  
weave, twizzle  
wee hours, small hours  
weekday, workday  
weekend, w/e  
a week from..., ...week  
weekly market, market  
weenie, winkie  
weight, weigh up  
well done!, all Sir Garnet  
well done (meat), well cooked  
well-heeled, financial  
well heeled, well breeched  
well nigh, getting on for  
Welshman, Taffy  
wet, dabbly  
whacky, scatty  
what's fair is fair, fair's on  
what's the ticket?, what's the drill?  
wheelchair, bath chair; invalid's chair;  
wheeled chair  
when all is said and done, at close of play;  
at the end of the day  
when the time comes, on the day  
when you come right down to it, when it  
comes to the bone  
where the difficulty lies, where the shoe  
pinches  
whew!, lumme!  
while, whilst  
while-U-wait shoe repair shop, heel bar  
whimper, grizzle  
whimsical structure, folly  
whine, whinge  
whitener, blanco  
white raisin, sultana  
whiz, dab  
whole note, semibreve  
wholesaler, merchant  
whole tone, tone  
whole wheat bread, wholemeal bread  
whopping, swingeing  
whorehouse, knocking-house

Who wants this?, Quis?  
 wicked, naughty  
 wicket, hoop  
 wide awake, fly  
 wife, dutch  
 wildcat strike, unofficial strike  
 wild open land, heath  
 willies, jim-jams  
 win a bet, have it off  
 windbreaker, windcheater  
 winding, crinkle-crankle  
 window shade, blind  
 window shopping, window gazing  
 windshield, windscreen  
 wind (wound), pip  
 wine (port) glass, schooner  
 winner, runner  
 with, w.  
 with a double bed, double-bedded  
 with all due respect, with respect  
 withdraw, stand down  
 within hailing distance of, within cooee of  
 with it, trendy  
 witness stand, witness-box  
 wobbly, wonky  
 wolf, scoff  
 Women's Royal Army Corps, WRAC  
 won't work out, won't go  
 wooded vale, dene  
 woolen helmet, Balaclava  
 woolen scarf, comforter  
 Woolworth & Co., Woollies  
 woozy, muzzy  
 work, answer  
 work by the book, work to rule  
 work in vain, plough the sand  
 work like mad, do one's nut  
 work out, sort out  
 the works, lot  
 World War I, Great War  
 World War II, Hitler's War  
 worn out, frazzled

worn-out rope, junk  
 wow (impress), knock  
 wrapper, dressing gown  
 wreck, crash  
 wrecking crew, breakdown gang  
 wrench, spanner  
 writing table, davenport  
 written agreement, articles

## Y

yard, garden  
 Yeah, sure!, and pigs might fly!  
 yearling sheep, hogget  
 year one, year dot  
 yell blue murder, yell pen and ink  
 yellow pages, trades directory book  
 yellow turnip, swede  
 yelp, waffle  
 Yield, Give Way  
 yield to maturity, yield to redemption  
 yokel, moonraker  
 young cabbage, spring greens  
 young rooster, cockerel  
 young salmon, fingerling  
 young tough, cockerel  
 young tough, skinhead  
 young Turks, ginger group  
 you're done!, Bob's your uncle!  
 You're welcome, Not at all  
 you win some/you lose some, gain on  
 swings/lose on roundabouts

## Z

zero, nought (naught)  
 zip code, post-code  
 zipper, zip  
 z (letter), izzard  
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 zucchini, courgette